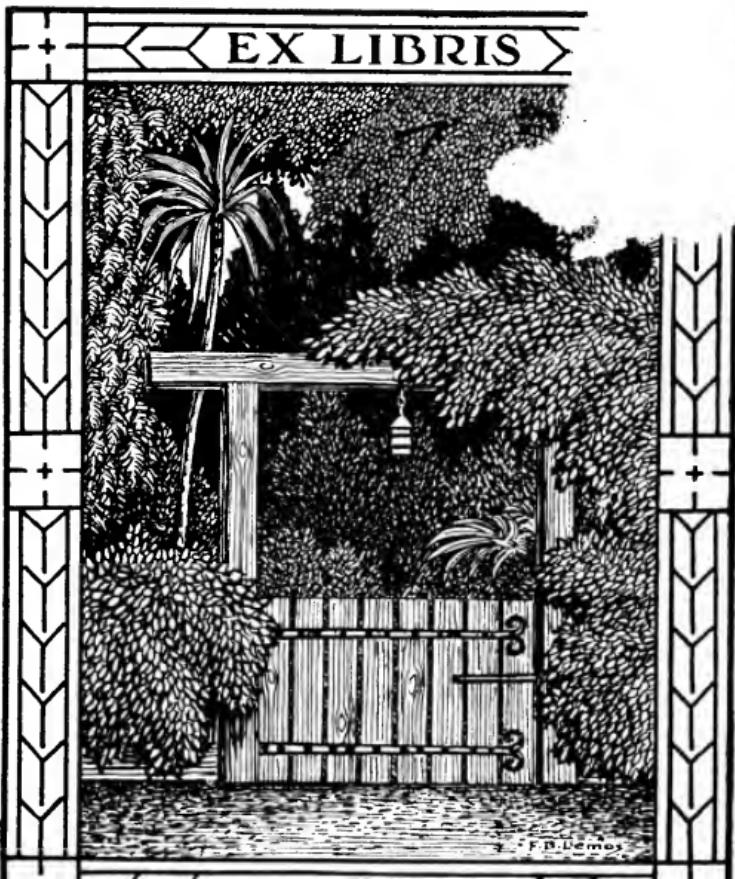


SOUL IN BRONZE

by

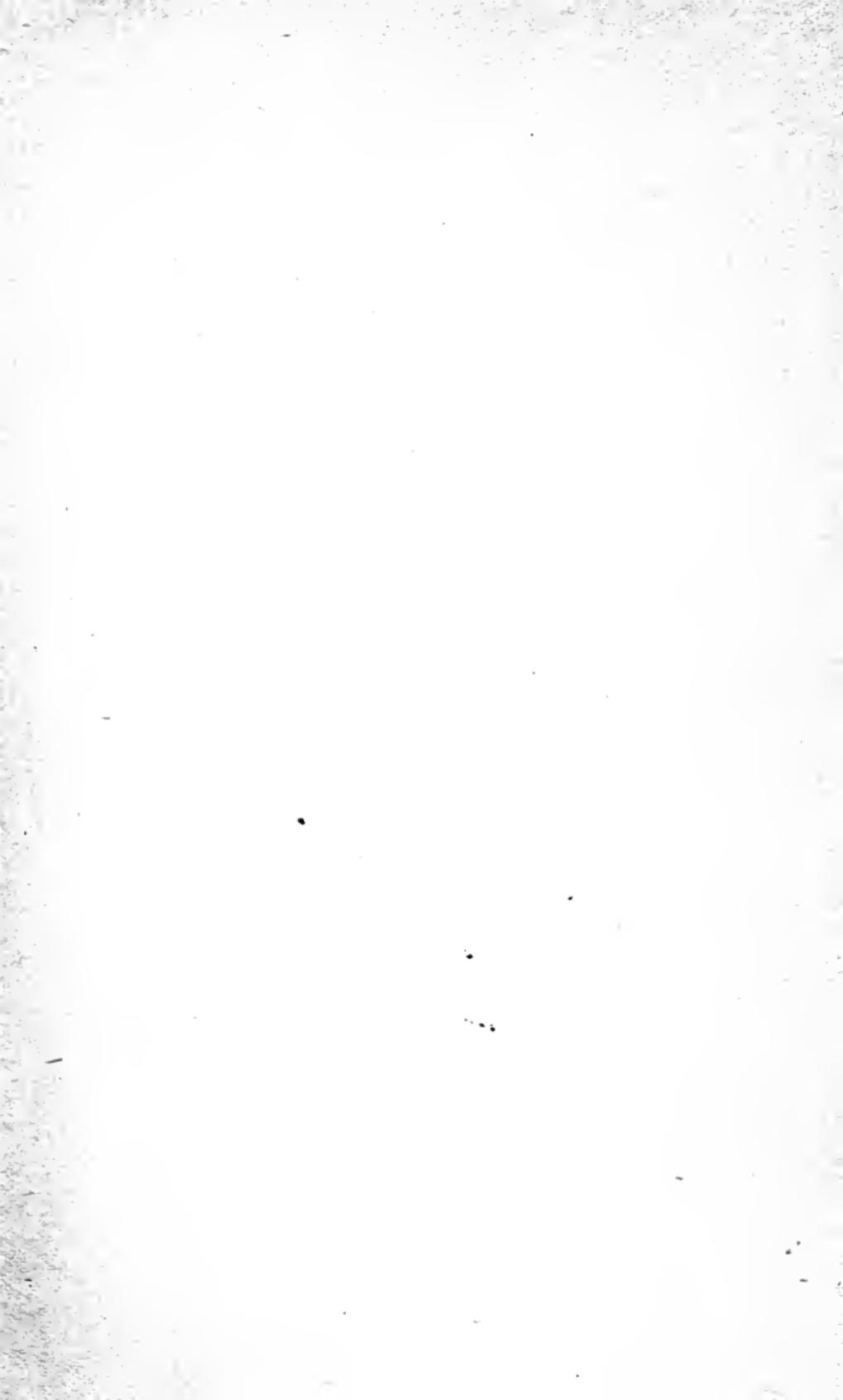
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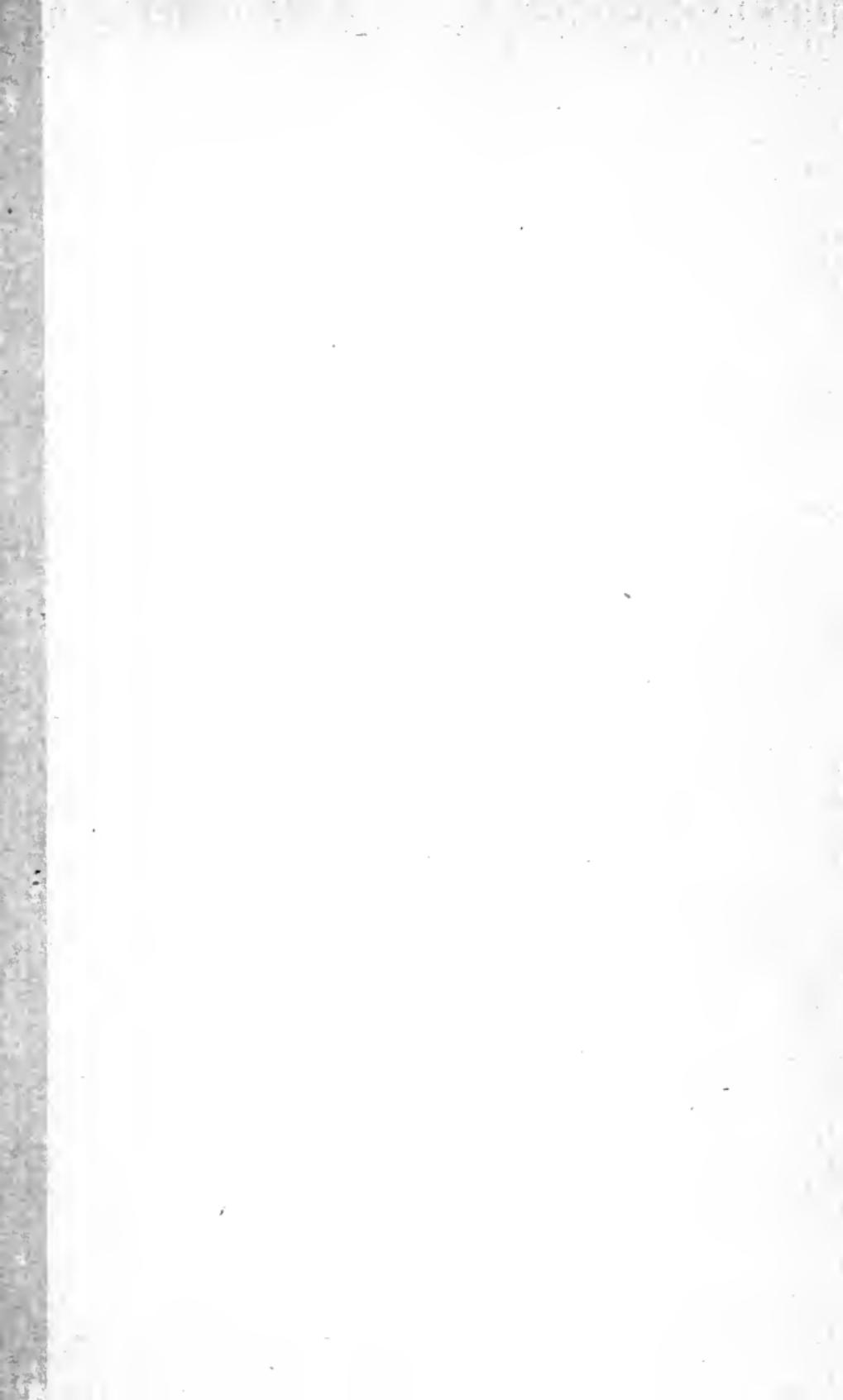






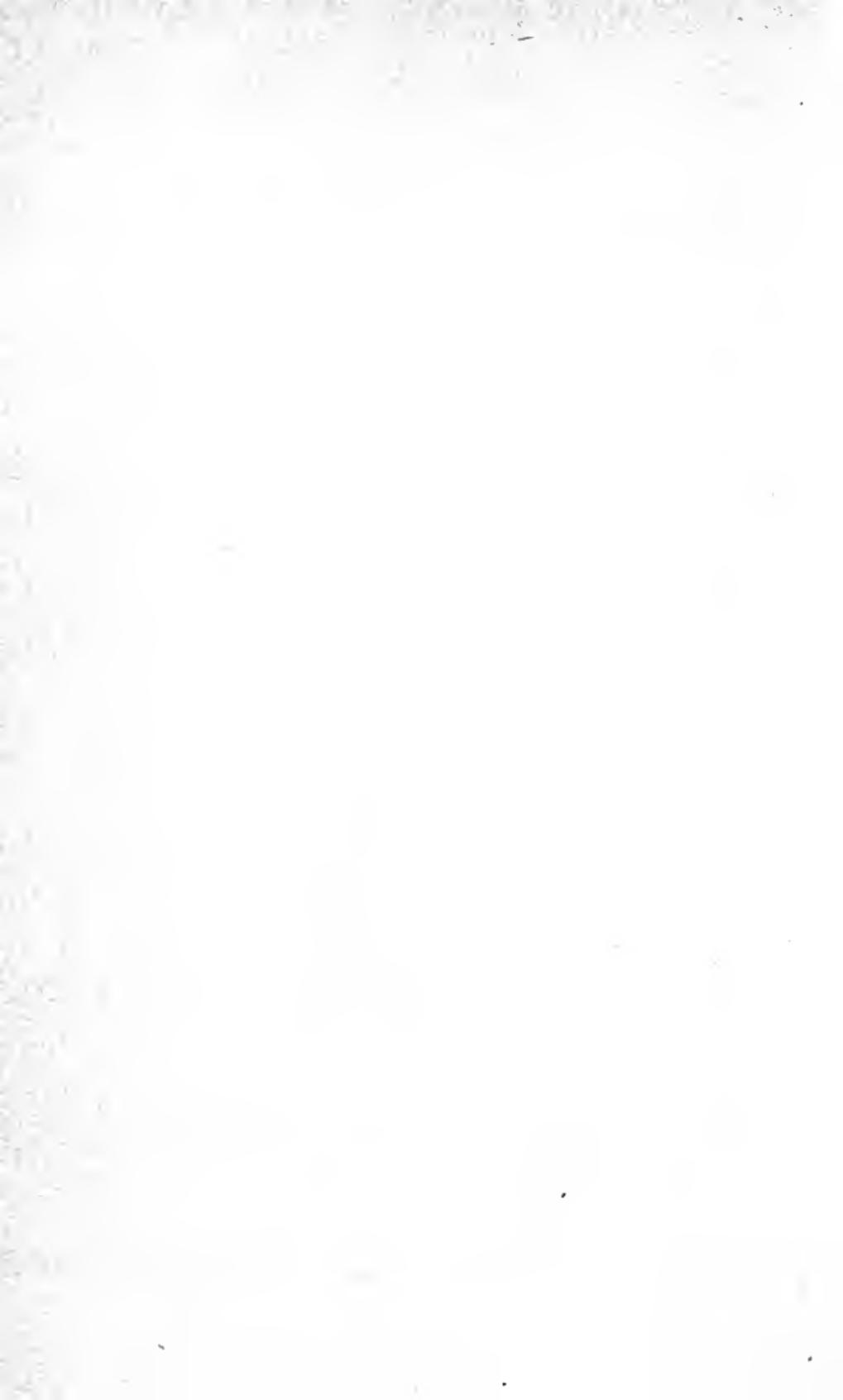








A SOUL in BRONZE



A SOUL in BRONZE

A Novel of Southern California

BY

CONSTANCE GODDARD DU BOIS

AUTHOR OF "A MODERN PAGAN," "THE
SHIELD OF THE FLEUR-DE-LIS," ETC.



HERBERT S. STONE and Company
CHICAGO and NEW YORK

1900

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C O P Y R I G H T 1900, B Y
H E R B E R T S. S T O N E & C O

TO THE MEMORY OF

HELEN HUNT JACKSON,

WHOSE WARM HEART AND ENLIGHTENED SYMPATHY

MADE HER THE FRIEND OF THE INDIAN,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, WITH

ENDURING ADMIRATION.

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CHAPTER I

The unclouded sun of Southern California flooded land and sea with glory. It is a sun that never smites. Its life-giving warmth sends the sluggish blood coursing with new vigor through the veins, draws the odor from the orange blossoms, the pungent scent from the eucalyptus trees, and sets the bees humming half-surfeited amidst the fragrant sage.

Among the inland hills where the sea breeze died away and spent itself, the mesas lay singed with the summer drought and unshaded from the sky; and where a brown field curved its outline in the foreground the upward movement of the transparent air could be seen like the flickering currents above a heated stove.

The little railroad train with its motor engine and loads of full and empty lemon boxes puffed and snorted into the station which was its terminus, and here discharged its few remaining passengers in what seemed to be a cul-de-sac among the hills; a granite quarry, that scarred a

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cliff, being the only evidence of human industry, and a rambling one-story hotel half-buried in the shade of fig trees the only visible place of shelter beyond the station sheds. The observant eye, however, might find tokens of the existence of a stable in the rear; and the traveller whose ticket assured him a twenty-mile ride as the completion of his journey knew that a stage would start in half an hour, which interim was dedicated to luncheon in a funereally-shaded room in the sleepy tavern.

The stage-road made its exit from the apparently impassable mountain wall which receded at its advance along the course of a rocky stream, dry and voiceless now, but in winter a formidable torrent. The stage, with its square body painted red, and its enormous yellow wheels and axles, swung and pitched in the ascent over "chuck-holes" and rocks buried beyond view by six inches of dust.

"You'll find the seat by the driver the easiest, Miss," the station-agent had said, as he assisted at that important daily function, the departure of the coach.

"But the sun is so hot," the young lady addressed had replied in a musical voice, with a doubtful glance at the driver's high and unshaded position. "I think I will go inside."

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Putting a daintily-shod foot on the step, and bending her pretty head, she was about to enter the coach when she drew back in alarm. "I can not ride with an Indian," she cried. "Are we the only passengers?"

The terror in her tone should have appealed to masculine chivalry, but the station-agent had retreated, the driver sat silent and indifferent, and only the Indian, a well-dressed and civilized specimen of his race, heard and noted the remark.

He rose, lifted his hat, and retreated by the opposite door, mounting at a stride to the vacant place on the box.

The whip cracked, the four horses strained at the start, and with a lurch and a bounce, and wrapped from sight like an enchanted chariot in a cloud of golden dust, the coach departed and the ascent began.

Dorothea Fairfax blushed and nervously arranged the fastenings of her veil.

"I wonder if I offended him," she thought; "but no, he is only an Indian. I was not actually afraid, of course; that was only a little piece of affectation. But fancy Aunt Sally's horror if she could see me starting alone on such a journey with a driver who seems to be dumb, and a wild—no, a tame—Indian beside him;

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and only my poor little self in this great big bouncing stage-coach. Even papa might be a little concerned—dear papa!"

The stage, lumbering upward, made steady progress, but its two passengers were alike absorbed in memories which rendered them half-oblivious to the passing landscape. Antonio Lachusa, the Indian, was reviewing the history of his life with a courage founded upon that philosophy whose foster-nurse is a resigned despair. He saw himself as a child of eight confronted with a startling fairies' gift, a rich lady's patronage, the promise of an education in the East, later on wealth, ease, luxury, and all at the price of an aching homesick heart. He had paid the price, and the reward had been greater than he hoped.

Mrs. Leigh, his eccentric patroness, had made him, in effect, her adopted child; later on, her confidential secretary and courier during the happy vacations when, alone together, or with a few chosen friends, they had explored Europe and the Orient. Her wealth and influence had won for him the highest advantages of school and college; and buried among his books he had lived a happy life, winning prizes in his studies and honors in the field of athletics, with her smile of approbation for the crown of every

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endeavor. Her sudden death without a will had left him penniless and desolate. The hopes and purposes of years failed him like broken bubbles. The slow steps of the stage horses straining at their task as they mounted the toilsome ascent were taking him home to the reservation, a stranger uncertain of his welcome.

Dorothea Fairfax, his fellow traveller, was taxing her bravery to resist the tears which dimmed her vision. A stranger's welcome awaited her also; and her heart ached with the double grief of a parting in which she realized her father's sorrow as keenly as her own. Edward Fairfax had lived for years self-exiled from his family, an unrepentant prodigal, idealized by the clinging affection of his motherless daughter into a hero of romance. Dorothea had been educated in New York in an atmosphere of staid conservatism, but ever present in her fancy was the subtle consciousness of her father's influence drawing her close to him in spite of all opposing forces. She lived in the thought so long that at last it realized itself as wishes will, falling then into dust and ashes like Dead Sea fruit.

She did not relinquish her ideal, but she found the man as she believed in him, sadly at variance with his environment. The circle in

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which he moved in Valparaiso was distinguished by an easy Bohemianism not without its standards, though these were novel and unacceptable to Dorothea. The dark-eyed señors with whom her father played baccarat, the low-voiced señoritas who smoked cigarettes, affronted her prejudices as her reserve offended theirs. She drooped in the uncongenial atmosphere like a transplanted flower; and her father noted the first symptom of failing health with keen anxiety.

"Your mother went just so," he said, "with a cough that was neglected. You shall have better care. This is no place for my fastidious little girl. I will send you to your uncle's widow in Southern California, and when I can fix up my business I will follow you. We will have a cosy little home there in the wilderness." This plan, combated with tears by Dorothea, was immovably adhered to by her father, and her present journey was the last stage in its accomplishment.

The narrow road, cut like a spiral in the mountain side, wound steeply upwards, flanked on one side by an escarpment of bare, jagged rocks hewn to make a passage, on the other by a deep ravine. As they neared the head of the

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pass, the driver drew a holster from beneath the cushion, and began to unfasten the straps.

"What is that for?" asked Antonio, observing the movement with some surprise.

"We've got the express box for the Governor mines on to-day," explained the driver. "A pile of money for the pay of the hands. There have been stages held up along here before now, and there have been rumors of danger lately. I expected a couple of men for a guard to-day when they sent the box, but they didn't come. Well, I'll be ready for 'em."

As he spoke he laid the pistol upon the seat to secure the use of both hands for the reins, for here the road turned sharply, and the leaders plunged, being the first to catch sight of a horseman who was confronting them in the middle of the road, a handkerchief tied over the lower part of his face, and a cocked revolver in his upraised hand.

His imperious command, the driver's loud exclamation, the crack of revolvers, the heavy lurching of the coach, came in quick succession; and Antonio found himself, he hardly knew how, on his knees before the box, the tangled reins in one hand, and an arm around the limp and half-lifeless body of the driver, who had fallen back upon the seat, a bullet in his side.

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"I am dead," he gasped. "The money's safe."

"You defended it nobly," said Antonio, encouragingly. "I gave the scoundrel a bullet in the shoulder. His horse threw him and ran down the road. If he has no accomplices we are safe."

He spoke to deaf ears. The weight upon his arm grew heavier. The red blood clotted upon the shirt front and ceased to flow. The dead man's head rocked back and forth under the impulse of the lurching coach, as the maddened horses plunged forward, guided at a hair's breadth from destruction by Antonio's grasp upon the reins.

Dorothea's scream had followed the pistol shots. She had seen a man fall beside her, and then roll face downward from ledge to ledge, staining the rocks with blood. She held herself in place as the stage bounded along, grazing the angles of the jutting rocks, twisting and swaying about the dizzy spirals; and with bated breath she waited for the end, the death which must come in the likeness of that which she had witnessed. She had time for self-pity at the thought of her youthful face and form so grievously torn and mangled.

The pace slackened; the coach stopped,

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Antonio descended from his seat, and with the reins in his hands looked in at the door.

"You must climb upon the seat and hold the horses," he said. "They are quiet now, but quivering with fear. They must not start until I have laid the dead man decently upon the seats here."

"The dead man—a robber?" queried Dorothea.

"No, the driver. He was shot before I could get the pistol from its case."

"And you killed the robber?" she asked.

"Not unless the fall over the rocks killed him," he answered. "I shot him in the shoulder, and his horse ran and threw him."

Dorothea buried her face in her hands. She had never been in the presence of death before. The horror of it struck a chill to her heart.

Antonio mistook her thought. "And now it is I you fear," he exclaimed—"an Indian. You dread them all as savages. Here, take the pistol. See, it is loaded. Now you are safe, are you not, and will climb as I beg you upon the box? There may be others, accomplices. We must make haste. We have on board an express box with money which must be safely delivered."

Dorothea allowed him to take her arm and assist her to mount the box. She held the four

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trembling horses well in hand while Antonio raised the heavy, blood-stained body in his arms, and descended with his burden, which he placed upon an improvised bier within the coach. She did not blench nor turn away her eyes from the sight; and when he returned and took his place beside her she relinquished the reins and the pistol together.

"Take it," she said; "I am not afraid." Then she fainted quietly away upon his shoulder.

Antonio felt his blood recede and fill his heart with strange emotion, as he felt the soft pressure of her head upon his arm. He looked down upon her in bewilderment, wondering what it were best to do. She had taken off her veil, and her hat was pushed back upon the forehead, where loose curling locks were set astray by the wind. The death-like pallor of her face detracted from its beauty, but gave to it the pathos of helpless appeal. The various methods for her restoration which knowledge suggested, prudence rejected; for he did not dare to face the possibility that her eyes might open with terror upon him. It was with a pang of anguish that he realized that he could be to this beautiful girl an object of instinctive fear and aversion.

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Dorothea stirred and opened her eyes. Her vision was clouded; the blood sang in her ears; she remained leaning upon Antonio's shoulder, unconscious of this support; and in that moment when her bewildered look passively met his, Antonio's heart gave a bound, and then stood still.

She raised her head, pushed her hat squarely into place, leaned back upon the cushion, and said, in a quavering voice, "I am rather ashamed of myself. I have fainted, I believe."

"I believe so," replied Antonio.

Her eyes brightened with returning courage. This Indian was a simple soul with a good face, kind, mild and dignified. She was safe with him, and only the horror of the burden which they bore within the coach remained, and that she must try to forget.

"I have always lived in the city," she said, as much to herself as to the Indian. "I am not prepared for the startling adventures of Western life."

Antonio made no reply. He was struggling to crush within himself the very thought of the emotion which had set his pulses tingling. For a fleeting moment he had known what love might be; and, with a new and bitter pang of revelation, he saw that he was inevitably cut

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off from all the best and tenderest joys of life. He had climbed too far above his lawful place, yet he could never reach and keep a higher level. Custom and prejudice would act as weights to drag him down.

"How far is it to the town where the dead man must be taken?" asked Dorothea, nervously.

"I have not been over this road for fifteen years," he answered, "but I think there is no nearer place than Hilton, a little town we pass through. It must be ten miles from here."

"Where have you been these fifteen years?" asked Dorothea, for the sake of making conversation. Under the circumstances it was necessary to talk even to an Indian.

"At school and college in the East," he replied; "and during vacations, in Egypt, Palestine and India; later, in France and England."

"Oh, you are a rich man, then?" said Dorothea.

"I have not a penny. The friend who did all this for me is dead."

"I wondered if there were any rich Indians," she said. "I shall soon know all about them and their ways, I suppose, as the aunt whom I am going to visit is teacher of the Indian school at Casa Blanca."

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"You will live at Casa Blanca?" asked Antonio.

"Yes, it is to be for the present my home."

"I am sorry for you," said Antonio, gravely. "With your fear of Indians you can not be happy there."

She smiled as she looked up at him. "If they are all like you I shall not be afraid," she replied.

"But I thought you had a horror of me."

"Oh, no; how stupid of you! I can tell a good Indian from a bad Indian. That was a silly speech I made, and I little thought that after all I should have to ride miles and miles at your side with that terrible thing behind us in the coach. It is my punishment, I suppose."

Antonio made no reply.

"Where is your home?" asked Dorothea. To a gentleman she would not upon first acquaintance have put categorical questions, but a question is in most cases the only form of conversation that can be used with an inferior.

"My home, like yours, is to be at Casa Blanca. I belong on the reservation there."

"Oh!" said Dorothea; and she made no attempt to continue the conversation, but, spreading her parasol, leaned back in her seat, and fell to observing the scenery.

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The road, having climbed the steep grade, debouched upon a rolling mesa, or high table-land, at whose further edge a line of jagged mountains cut the horizon. Part of the land had been reclaimed for cultivation, and a wide field of barley stubble lay beside the highway, defended from encroachment by the ubiquitous barbed-wire fence.

"Look," said Antonio, "at the little birds upon the ground."

Dorothea followed his glance, and saw that where each fence-post cast a narrow shadow, a row of little birds sat one beside another in the limited shade.

"How comical they look," she said, laughing, "ranged like scholars in a class!"

"When all the birds are faint with the hot sun," quoted Antonio; "but here there are no cooling trees where they can hide."

He spoke as he would have done to Mrs. Leigh, who, he was sure, would quickly have responded, "Nor does that parched barley stubble suggest 'the new-mown mead';" and her look would have met his with a smile, and he would have felt the happy sense of good-fellowship which was the one joy he had counted on in life.

Dorothea only stared. Perhaps she did not

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know her Keats; perhaps she thought Antonio forward in the parade of his book-learning.

It was indeed very hot. The horses sweated at their task, and the continuous cloud of dust in which they moved stuck to their flanks and backs, and turned their coats to rusty yellow. It powdered Dorothea's hair and eyelashes, while the unfriendly sun burned her cheeks and the tip of her nose. She was neither happy nor comfortable, yet she uttered no complaint. She possessed a well-bred serenity which she endeavored to maintain at an extreme when circumstances put it to the test.

Antonio's stoicism surpassed her own, for it was not until they had crossed the mesa, and stopped in the welcome shade of some cotton-wood trees where there was a well, that Dorothea noticed, as he prepared to water the horses, that one of his arms was disabled and his coat-sleeve stained with blood.

"You are wounded," she exclaimed in concern.

"Yes, the robber gave us two shots before I hit him. One finished poor Jo in there, the other went through the fleshy part of my arm. I had to shoot with my left hand. That is why I did not kill him. I am very glad it happened so. I am thankful in my deepest heart that I did not kill a man."

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"Oh, oh!" said Dorothea, "how selfish and unthinking I have been! I noticed, too, that you drove with your left hand. Let me help you with the horses, but first roll up your sleeve and let me look at your arm."

"No, you would faint again at the sight of blood; that is why I said nothing. I thought perhaps I ought to bind it up, for the bleeding began to make me dizzy; but at last it stopped. My clothes stuck to it and closed the wound. It is best to leave it so."

"What must you think of me?" she said. "I am brave when there is need. Let me wash the wound and bind it with a clean handkerchief."

Antonio shook his head. "We ought, before long, to come upon a man who can do it," he said. "It is strange that we have gone so far without meeting a wagon."

"I dread to meet people, for they would stop us and annoy us with morbid curiosity and questions," she replied.

"I should be glad to find some one who could ride inside with the dead," said Antonio. "I do not like to leave him at the mercy of these jolts. He rolls from side to side. It is pitiful to see a corpse so disordered."

"I will sit there if you wish," said Dorothea, growing pale.

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"No, no; I only wish that I could find some other way for you to make the rest of the journey. Ah, there comes a wagon. We do not meet it, but it overtakes us."

A light wagon, drawn by two spirited chestnut horses, drew up beneath the trees, and the occupants, two young men, leaped out.

"We heard that there had been a hold-up; is it true?" cried one.

"Yes, by ——, and here is poor Jo Williams dead," exclaimed the other, springing upon the step, and looking into the coach.

Both raised their eyes at the same moment and caught sight of Dorothea on the box, and they mechanically removed their hats while they gazed in fixed surprise. Antonio drew them aside to spare Dorothea the annoyance she had feared; but after he had been minutely questioned and cross-questioned, Dorothea, alighting, came to his relief.

"Do not keep him talking any longer, if you please," she said. "He is badly wounded. Will you not dress his arm?"

"I was about to ask that favor," said Antonio, "though the wound is a trifle; and also that one of you gentlemen will take the young lady in the carriage with you and drive on ahead. It is too hard for her to sit here in the

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hot sun, knowing all the time that the dead man is there close behind her."

"Oh, I do not mind that," she said. "I am not a child. At first I felt it, but now I have become used to it."

"But it will get on your nerves badly, so long a strain. The Indian is right," said the taller of the men. "Please seat yourself in my buggy. Nelson, go with the Indian, after you have looked at his arm."

"If you will drive," said Antonio to the young man, who came forward, "I will sit inside with the corpse. I feel that I owe him that respect."

It was thus arranged, and Dorothea, taking the advance in the light open buggy with the spirited horses, whose owner set them going at a spanking pace, drew a long breath of relief.

"It was terrible," she said. "I am so glad to be free from it."

Nature met her eyes with a smiling reflection of her happier mood. The open mesas were for a time at an end, and the road wound upward between large live oaks whose gnarled and twisted branches made arabesques of shade upon the ground. A tiny stream ran beside the road, keeping green the grasses and shrubs that bordered its course, while the quivering leaves

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of the cottonwoods danced overhead. A cool breeze blew, and a buzzard, balancing himself against it, soared aloft with widespread unflapping wings.

"It was a sad affair, and I am sorry that you should have been there," responded the young man. "Nelson and I were coming up the grade when we met a riderless horse, and further on we saw a man half-way up the side of the cañon dragging himself from rock to rock. We shouted to him, but he did not answer, and we drove on without concerning ourselves very much with the matter until we met a boy who had been shooting rabbits on the mesa, and he told us he had seen the stage go by with a dead man in it, so we whipped up and hurried after. But now let us talk of something else. Is this your first visit to California?"

"Yes. I have always lived in New York, and lately spent a year in Valparaiso."

"And you will fancy us a lot of bloodthirsty desperadoes; but I assure you it is the most peaceable country in the world. Young ladies ride about everywhere alone, and nothing ever happens."

"After this I prefer that things do not happen," replied Dorothea. "I will welcome the monotony of Casa Blanca."

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"You do not stop at Hilton, then? I am sorry for that, for I live there. I am a lawyer, Harry Burke, at your service. I have clients who live at Casa Blanca. Do you know the Wilsons there?"

"No, I have never been there; but my uncle's widow, Señora Aguilar, is teacher of the Indian school."

"Oh, I know Mrs. Aguilar. We anglicize the title," answered Burke. "She is a particular friend of mine, and a charming woman, in spite of her enthusiastic fondness for the Indians. I am sure you will be very happy with her, or at least that you will be very fond of her. I cannot promise that the life there will be altogether congenial to a young lady accustomed to gaiety and to a large circle of friends."

"I have never had many friends," said Dorothea, won to confidence by the good-humored glance of his honest brown eyes. "I have had rather a lonely life, until lately, when I have been with my father at Valparaiso; and there we had society, or at least people to talk to, eat with and dance with; but of real friends none at all, I think."

She spoke a little sadly, and Burke answered kindly: "You will find plenty here, I hope.

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We are, as a rule, warm-hearted, well-meaning people, and I can answer for one or two who will stand the test as real friends. I have told you that your aunt has given me that place with her. Perhaps you will be kind enough later on to include me in your list."

"I am sure that I ought to do that," said Dorothea, smiling. "You rescued me from an uncomfortable position. My journey is so much pleasanter than it might have been."

"If I remember, it was the Indian, not I, who should have the credit for suggesting the change. I am afraid I should not have thought of it, though it gives me great pleasure to be of service to you. I was intent with the thought of the murder, and, to be honest, I did not consider your position at all."

Dorothea felt a secret chagrin. She would have preferred that he had accepted her thanks, even if he did not altogether deserve them. A woman never appreciates the blundering honesty that fails of the chance for a compliment.

"At any rate, I may thank you for the use of your easy carriage and fine horses," she said.

"I hope you will have many drives behind them," he replied. "I could drive blindfolded over every road between Hilton and Casa Blanca. You will often see me there."

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Dorothea had removed her gloves to push back the rebellious locks from her forehead. Burke noted the delicacy of the hands and the polished brilliancy of the rosy nails, which denoted the hand of an aristocrat, and confirmed the impression made by her voice, although the dust and sun had done their worst in transforming Dorothea's outer person, even her pretty face, into the semblance of a daughter of the people.

"I suppose I must look like a fright," she said in self-conscious deprecation.

"We give up caring about looks out here," he replied. "It is not safe in California to judge people by their clothes."

"But my clothes were very nice when I started," she answered, naïvely; "please give me credit for that."

"I do," he said. "I give you credit for much more than that."

His look and tone expressed such sincere admiration that Dorothea, who had a moment before been wishing for a compliment, now withdrew within herself like a little frightened snail.

Arrived at Hilton, Burke conducted his guest to a seat upon the hotel porch, thickly shaded with vines, where he had a table set with a cold lunch, and himself prepared to make tea.

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"I know the capabilities of the place," he remarked. "Being a bachelor, I am condemned to take my meals here. They range from bad to indifferent; but I have a private stock of tea, and know how to brew it. By the time my horses have had their dinner, the stage will be here. We shall learn when the inquest is to be held, and then I will drive you on to Casa Blanca."

Dorothea paled at the thought of an inquest, wondering whether she should be summoned as witness, but she made no allusion to her anxieties. Burke watched her with pleasure as she sat opposite to him at table. She gave him the impression of a character intrinsically sweet and strong, although time might be needed to develop all the strength, and sorrow might lay a frosty finger upon the fruit before its full sweetness should appear. She had not yet grown beyond the happy self-concentration of youth, when the external touches only the surface of the consciousness. She did not dream of analyzing her companion with any answering keenness of observation. She knew intuitively that he was a friend. She felt that he admired her; and the thought was vaguely pleasant, yet it set her pulses astir with a slight alarm, and awoke a shy reserve which appeared only in

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added dignity and grace. Burke watched her delicate hands at work among the teacups with a sudden realization of the vapid emptiness of his solitary life.

CHAPTER II

While the two still sat at table, an open farm-wagon, drawn by a pair of shaggy horses, approached the inn. Its occupants were a woman in a sunbonnet and gingham gown, an old Indian who acted as driver, and half a dozen dark-skinned, smiling children who sat upon the straw behind.

"It is Mrs. Aguilar," said Burke, springing to his feet. "I will bring her to you," and he advanced hatless into the blazing sunshine.

"How do you do, Harry?" said the woman in the sunbonnet, giving him her hand as he aided her descent. "I came down to-day to meet the stage. I have not seen you since I got the letter, so you do not know the news. I am to have a guest, a niece of my husband, who is coming to live with me. I am just a little afraid to meet her, and yet I could not wait. Good old José and some of the children came with me. Don't they look well in their summer suits? You recognize some of them, I am sure. This is Anna, who had the fever last spring——"

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"Dear Mrs. Aguilar, I must venture to interrupt you. Your niece is here, waiting for you on the porch. I had the pleasure of the first meeting, and now I will leave you together."

Dorothea appeared, holding out her hands.

"My dearest child, how did you manage to fall from the skies? I am so glad to see you, and so surprised."

A kiss was exchanged in the depths of the sunbonnet.

"Come here, Manuel and Martha, Anna and Samuel," said Mrs. Aguilar. "This is my niece, Miss Fairfax, come all the way from South America to visit us. They drove the ten miles just to be the first to see you, my dear. How well you look, and how pretty you are! You don't mind my saying that, do you? And you are just a little bit like your uncle; perhaps you remember him—the curve of the mouth and chin is like him."

She held Dorothea's hand and pressed it warmly and lingeringly. She was tall and slight, and stooped a little as if worn with the hardships of her lot; but she was full of tireless energy and cheer. Her voice was charming.

"Come, José, water the horses, and give them their barley, and then we must go home. No time for stopping at the store to-day. Miss

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Dolly will sit on the seat between us. There is room."

"I am afraid I must wait for Mr. Burke's permission to leave," said Dorothea. "The coach was held up, the driver killed, and there is to be an inquest."

Mrs. Aguilar was loud in exclamations of wonder and distress. Poor Jo Williams, she knew him, and she knew his wife, who had a six-months-old baby. How sad, how tragic, how trying for Dolly! She would stay with her, of course, and José could stable the horses under the cottonwood tree by the brook. They could drive home by moonlight if necessary.

Burke returned when the stage drove up, crowded closely by curious outrunners who swarmed about it on foot and on horseback, attracted from all quarters by news of the freight it bore.

The corpse of the murdered man was carried on an improvised litter to an undertaker's shop near by. The coroner was summoned by telegraph.

"It may be twenty-four hours before he arrives," said Burke. "You can come down again if necessary, Miss Fairfax. Meantime, I hope you will allow me to take you the rest of the way. I am going to Casa Blanca this even-

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ing. I have business with a client there, and to-morrow my horses will be again at your disposal."

"Oh, Harry," cried Mrs. Aguilar, before Dorothea could reply, "it is not true that you are going to bring that suit against the Indians?"

"I am afraid it is, Mrs. Aguilar; but do not think too hardly of me. I must do my client's work."

"The devil's work!" she answered energetically. "I did not believe it of you. No, Dolly need not use your carriage. We have room to spare. I came ten miles for the sake of her company. You do not mind sitting a little close, dear?"

"Not at all," replied Dorothea, looking somewhat doubtfully at old José, who stood awaiting orders.

"We will go home, José, home at once."

Burke was chagrined that Mrs. Aguilar persistently avoided his look, and that under the impulse of her authority Dorothea was led away without the opportunity for a farewell.

She bowed and looked after him a little ruefully when he passed them on the road, his horses spinning onwards, while the heavy wagon creaked and lumbered up the long ascent.

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Antonio was left to trudge the ten miles to his destination, but he was not alone. A group of Indian youths found more interest in attaching themselves to his company than in hanging upon the outskirts of the crowd, or peering through the darkened windows of the undertaker's shop.

Two or three rode bronco ponies, the others, like Antonio, went on foot, and the sociability of the riders kept the pedestrians buried in a cloud of dust, and often in danger of being trodden under foot. Good humor prevailed; and a trifling discomfort seemed only to furnish cause for merriment. Their welcome of Antonio was tinged with a shade of awe. They knew that he had been to college, wore fine clothes, and was reputed to possess fabulous wealth. At the same time he was one of them, a member of the tribe, speaking their language, and associated with their earliest recollections.

"Do you remember, Antonio, how we climbed the cliff and stole the eagle's eggs?" asked a good-looking young man shyly.

"Why, Felipe, is it you?" responded Antonio. "I should never have known you for the round-faced boy of eight who was my rival in every sport."

"And I remember," said another, "the day

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that Antonio left us, how we peeped from behind the house and watched the carriage and the lady in it, and Antonio beside her staring like an owl and ready to cry, but braving it out and full of his importance."

"And you wished it was you," said Felipe.

"No, not then, but later, when we heard how rich he was. It must be a fine thing to be rich."

All echoed this sentiment with wistful glances at their mate.

Antonio longed for solitude. He was unused to sociability, and the demands of curiosity wearied him. Half-way to the rancheria he found an opportunity to detach himself from his companions.

Two broncos came clattering down the stony grade, one ridden by an aged Indian woman, the other by a younger one carrying in front of her a two-year-old child. At sight of the procession advancing upwards, both nodded greetings.

"Who are they?" asked Antonio, with a vague stir of recollection.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Felipe. "You have become a stranger indeed. That is Angela and Marta, your grandmother and sister. This is Antonio Lachusa," he called out, completing

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the introduction, and his companions smiled broadly, realizing the humor of the situation.

Marta did not smile.

"I will leave you," said Antonio. "I will stay with them for a while;" and after some debate of the matter his escort reluctantly departed, cheered by the consciousness of the unusual intelligence which they carried with them to Casa Blanca.

Angela was deaf, and did not realize that the stranger was of interest to her, so she urged her horse onwards at its slow, shambling gait; but Marta paused, held out her hand, and looked shyly at her brother.

"You are welcome," she said.

"And you to me. Whose is the child?"

"Mine," said Marta.

"And who is your husband?"

"I have none," she answered.

At sight of Antonio's face, she bent her head and wept. "Oh, brother, brother, why did you come back?" she added.

"I came back to my home," he replied, "but I find it dishonored. I feel now that I have no home."

"It is not my fault, brother," she sobbed.

Antonio ground his teeth. "And the man?" he gasped.

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"If I tell you, you will wish to kill him," she answered. "I know it by your face."

"Yes, I would like to kill him," he replied.

"But promise me you will be patient."

"I will be patient," said Antonio. "An Indian is not allowed to avenge his honor. What is left for him but patience?"

"He is the postmaster and store-keeper," she said, "a rich man and a white man. He sells liquor to the Indians. One day he gave me a glass of cider with a drug in it."

Antonio staggered and pressed his hand to his forehead.

"I must follow grandmother," continued Marta, regarding him with a mournful look. "We are going to visit Manuel's wife at Leona. She has a fever and wishes grandmother to nurse her, and I will work for her till she is well. It is a change. We have been hungry at the rancheria. Now you have come, brother, we shall all be rich."

He made no reply, and Marta, after lingering awhile in silence, shook her bridle and moved on with drooping head.

Antonio stood in the middle of the road where she had left him. The afternoon sun beat fiercely upon the dusty highway. Behind lay the world of wide thought, high endeavor,

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eager ambitions; before him, the rancheria, narrow, barren, poverty-blighted; but he had no choice, he must go onward.

The white house which gave its name to the Indian reserve, the post-office and the small settlement about it was a long, stuccoed building, erected in Spanish style around three sides of a courtyard upon which the doors of the dwelling rooms opened, those of the upper story giving upon a gallery supported by round wooden pillars and enclosed with ornamental lattice-work. The court once boasted a fountain set about with palm-trees and rose-bushes, but the basin now was empty; a headless goddess held a broken urn, the palm-trees were dead, and, lacking the necessary irrigation, the roses had ceased blooming during the summer drought.

The house had been built by an Englishman who had sunk a fortune in an unsuccessful gold mine, and at last deserted it and his property together, selling at a loss to the present owner, a retired merchant and speculator who still had hopes of the gold mine, which he was preparing to capitalize.

The white house, now called "Wilson's," was occupied by the senior possessor of the name,

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his wife, two daughters, and the husband of the elder of the two, who kept the post-office and conducted a productive gin-shop, dignified by the name of store, on the outskirts of the Indian reservation.

Burke's chestnut horses turned into the carriage drive unguided; he flung the reins to a stable-boy and entered the paved courtyard, which echoed to his tread. At his approach a hand stole out from the trellised balcony and flung a shower of red blossoms plucked from a climbing vine upon his head. He caught the falling flowers and looked up with a smile as he fastened one in his buttonhole.

As he disappeared within the doorway the young girl, who had been watching him with shining eyes, sprang from her hiding-place among the vines and unceremoniously entered her sister's room.

"Nell," she said, "Harry is here. He has just come, two hours late."

"Have you been counting the hours?" asked her sister, a pretty but care-worn matron of twenty-five, who stood at the mirror adding a finishing touch to her toilet by the application of a powder-puff. "Tell me, Bess, do I look like a fright? I cried my eyes out last night, and I show it, I know."

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"Do not worry; no one will notice it," was the careless reply. "But what do you suppose the neighbors say? They all believe that Harry and I are engaged; and I will tell you a secret, Nell. I think they are likely very soon to be right."

She began to hum the fragment of a tune, as she twirled about the room in a fantastic dance.

"Nonsense, child," replied her sister, sharply. "He has never had an idea of such a thing."

As she spoke the face which confronted her in the mirror looked strangely haggard; and the hand trembled which adjusted a stray lock of hair.

"Will you not give us your blessing, Nell?" asked Bessie, with thoughtless gaiety. "In one way it will be good for you, poor dear. When I am married to Harry, Sam must stop teasing you with his stupid jealousy. Sam is really too short-sighted. I think we shall surprise him."

Mrs. Jennings sank into a chair beside her toilet table.

"Perhaps it is you who are short-sighted, Bess," she replied. "A husband can see things more clearly than a young girl like you. How blind I was at your age! Why must experience always come too late?"

"Old people always say things like that,"

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remarked Bessie. "It is their privilege, I suppose, a sort of a consolation for missing things they might have had. Now, I am determined to have my good things as I go along. I think it is people's fault if they miss them."

She smiled as she delivered this aphorism, heedless of the pain her words might give.

Meantime, the subject of this conversation was seated in a room on the ground floor, dedicated to the occupancy of the Casa Blanca Mining Company, whose framed prospectus occupied a conspicuous place above the mantelpiece. Mr. Wilson sat opposite his lawyer, leaning upon the table where a crayon map was outspread between them.

"Here is the line," he said, "where I claim that the Indian reservation encroaches on my land. Because it includes the newly-discovered borax mine my enemies say, of course, that my claim is fraudulent." The truth is, these lands have been very loosely surveyed. The Indians steal all they can get, and build their adobe huts, hunt and fish upon my land; and I say nothing until something like this occurs to give value to my boundary line. Then I assert my rights."

"I hope it is so, Mr. Wilson," answered Burke. "I should like to work for you with a

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full conviction of the justice of our case. I do not like to argue on the wrong side. I am never so sure of myself."

"Well, you can study it up. You will find that it is so, and I depend on you to convince the Court of it."

He rose as he spoke, took down a decanter from the shelf, and filled some glasses that stood upon a tray, adding, "Here's to our success." Burke drank the toast in silence. The afternoon was spent over books and papers. At the supper table Burke took his place as an expected guest, greeted with smiles by the ladies, and with an indifferent nod by Mr. Jennings.

"It is a long time since you have been here, Harry," said Mrs. Wilson.

"Three whole days," said Bessie, laughing. "What an age!"

"It has seemed long to me," said Burke. "Hilton is not a cheerful place of residence. In fact, when not in town at court, I live on the road to Casa Blanca."

"Why not at Casa Blanca?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"Perhaps some day——" began Mrs. Wilson, then she choked the end of her sentence and a laugh together in her handkerchief.

Bessie looked from one to the other of her

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parents with alert intelligence; then she met Burke's glance frankly but with heightened color. He felt himself on the verge of a perilous situation, and, though he was sure his will had no share in creating it, he realized that he had not perhaps resisted hitherto the current of events. Feeling an immediate necessity of doing this, he gathered himself together and remarked with an effort: "I had an adventure to-day. The Governor stage was held up on the Johnson grade, the driver was shot dead, and a passenger brought the stage in safety as far as Hilton, after disabling the robber and protecting the express box. My adventure was the rescue of a charming girl, who took refuge with me in my buggy and lunched with me at the hotel."

"Who was she?" asked Mrs. Jennings, smiling at the sight of Bessie's clouded face.

"She is a niece of Mrs. Aguilar at the school, and is on her way to visit her."

"Then she will be our neighbor," remarked Mrs. Jennings. "It will be pleasant for you, Bess, to have a young girl of your own age so near us. I hope you will take pains to cultivate her acquaintance."

"I hope so, too," said Burke, with an earnest look at Bessie, quite unconscious of the hidden

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meaning in her sister's words which caused her to color in vexation. "I am sure you will like her. I almost promised her that you would be friends. She is very interesting and attractive."

If her sister alone had spoken, Bessie would have returned a ready sarcasm. The situation between the two was strained by circumstances which did not openly appear but which interfered with any natural sympathy. Mrs. Jennings's nerves vibrated like an ill-tuned harp to Bessie's thoughtless jesting; and the younger sister made no allowance for the deep-seated grief which caused the wayward humor that gave her continual offence. While at heart each felt the strong tie of blood and would have resented a stranger's misinterpretation, this did not prevent the constant jangling of warring interests.

Burke's presence was oil upon troubled waters. With an instinct of deception which is at best a self-deception, Bessie adorned herself for him with charm of manner and gentleness of speech. The sudden pang of jealousy his words caused had taken her by surprise, and she had no reply for his appeal.

"I suppose it will be right for Bessie to visit her," said Mrs. Wilson. "She is a lady, no

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doubt, though poor Mrs. Aguilar is in such humble circumstances."

"She is a lady," replied Burke. "She might be a princess."

He spoke with enthusiasm, smiling down Mrs. Wilson's petty doubts. She, poor woman, was in the uncertain position of the newly rich, forsaken by old standards, and querulously doubtful of each situation. Burke's opinion was the oracle to which she frequently deferred, for he dominated this circle with the superiority both of mind and heart. Mr. Jennings alone held himself aloof with a manner of declared hostility which Burke as constantly ignored, despising the man too sincerely to pay him the compliment of attention.

Mr. Wilson turned the current of the conversation by demanding an account of the hold-up.

"Who brought the stage in?" he inquired, at the conclusion of the narrative, to which all listened with interest.

"A good-looking young Indian who was a stranger to me," Burke replied.

"Perhaps it was the famous Antonio Lachusa," remarked Mr. Jennings. "We heard of his coming a while ago. Some of the young bucks came over to my place and celebrated by indulging in copious supplies of fire-

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water, which they wanted me to charge to his account. ‘Not much,’ I said, ‘I must see some of his wonderful wealth before I credit anything to it.’ They say he inherited a fortune from the white woman who was crazy enough to adopt him.”

“Why does he come back now?” asked Mr. Wilson, discontentedly. “A man like that is sure to be a dangerous spirit, and as matters stand at the rancheria a word from him would be like adding a spark to tow. I wish you would go down this evening, Burke, and see how things are going. I would be glad if you could gain some influence with this fellow and persuade him to leave the neighborhood, at any rate until our suit is settled.”

“I will see what I can do,” answered Burke.

“Hark!” said Bessie. “They are firing a salute as they do when the priest comes. He must be an important personage, and is he really rich? Who ever heard of a rich Indian?”

Antonio entered the rancheria at sunset. He had lingered on the road, climbing here and there to a well-remembered height commanding a view which he recalled as among his earliest impressions. He recognized the hillside where he had met the mountain lion; the dis-

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tant cliff where he had found the eagle's nest; the hollow where the humming-bird nested in the manzanita bush. The face of the country had been somewhat changed by the clearing of fields, the felling of trees, and the building of roads; but in nothing did he recognize so great a change as in the rancheria itself. It looked so small and shrunken, the adobe houses mere diminutive huts, the valley a narrow gorge, the mountain no longer the imposing mystery which it had been. He had to assure himself that these things must have remained unaltered. The change was in himself.

He could not return unobserved, as would have suited his mood, for the whole reserve was out of doors and awaiting him. A group of the chief Indians, the old Captain, the present incumbent of that office, the judge, and a number of the old people of importance in the tribe, advanced in procession to meet him. He was led into the tumble-down adobe building which served as council chamber, where addresses of welcome were made him; then he was taken to visit each of the houses in the settlement, where he was received with shy smiles and awkward hand-shakings which hid some fluttering heart-beats. To the marriageable young women it was as if a fairy prince had come among them. He

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was so handsome, so well dressed, and withal so rich.

To Antonio it was all like a dream. He recognized only by name these people who were his kith and kin. A few of the old men and women were as he had known them, only more withered, wrinkled and bent beneath the increasing weight of years. There were his uncles, aunts and cousins, his godparents and their families, all of whom stood in a relation of close intimacy with him, and yet to them his heart gave no warmer response than to the rest. He felt that instead of a heart he had a lump of ice in his breast.

"If it were Marta who, happy and innocent, should come to meet me, if my father and mother were alive, it would be different," he thought.

No one noticed any lack in his manner. Reserve and self-control are habitual with these people who, with their well-bred dignity, are nature's aristocrats. Antonio's smile was ready, and his words gentle and friendly. He listened with proper respect to his elders, and ate of the feast spread in his honor, after which he smoked a solemn cigarro in the council chamber. It was here that old José made a speech in which he revealed to Antonio the state of affairs at the rancheria.

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He spoke in the language of the tribe, and Antonio's heart was stirred by the unforgotten accents, which had a power possessed by no other tongue, however enriched by learning and cultivation. This was the language which he had heard from his mother's lips. It aroused dim recollections, vague associations, undefinable emotions. In its perfection it was heard only from the old people. The young were shy of its use, preferring the English or the more universal Spanish.

José concluded his speech by saying: "It is the rich who are plotting against us. They covet our lands. I appeal to you, Antonio, to use your riches to secure our rights. They say the American courts are all in the interest of the rich. The poor man has no chance of justice. Work for us, Antonio. Our Lady has sent you back to us in our time of need. How can they say that they have a claim upon our lands? They have been ours from time immemorial. Look at yonder mountain. No man knows how long it has been there; no man knows how long our people have been in this place. It is true we are now but a handful; and little by little we have been pushed aside from the wide plains where our cattle used to range, from the fertile valleys where now the

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white man plants his corn, to this barren corner where it is hard work to live, where we are poor and hungry. If there is wealth in rich mines here it is ours, and is given to make up to us for the unfriendly soil. Even in its poverty we love this spot, for here is our burying ground, and the dust of our dead is here. Now they would take this from us and leave us nothing. Surely, this must not be. We beg you to help us, Antonio. You are our hope."

Antonio rose and bowed, as he said: "I thank you, elders and friends, for your welcome of me. I return to be one of you. If I had riches they should be at your command; but this is all the wealth I bring, two hands to work for you, a heart and brain to feel and think for you. The beloved friend who gave me my home and education promised that I should be a rich man. She fully meant that this should be so, but she died suddenly, leaving me without a penny. It is the will of God. But if you rely upon me, I accept your trust. I will use in your service the education that has been given me. I know something of the white man's law, and will appeal to it for your protection."

Disappointment fell like a thunderbolt upon the assembly. Antonio Lachusa, the pride of

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his race, was an ordinary mortal, a poor, unconsidered Indian.

José spread out his hands in a gesture of despair.

"You can do nothing if you are poor," he said. "Have we not wise men among us, older, more experienced than you? It is money alone that we need—money; that is the only thing that can give power in this world."

"That should not be so," said old Pedro, a man of ninety years and more, who was a pious Christian, fasting on Fridays and wearing a rosary next his heart. "The priest will tell you something different. Does he not say that righteousness is power?"

"That may have been so in the old day, but not now," answered José. "It is the white men who upset all things. They are rich, and can do as they please. At the store they sell us our groceries, our cloth and calico, a third higher than to the next white man who buys the same goods. They buy our corn and barley for a third what they pay to the white man. Then they say we are ungrateful and haggle over prices. They call us thieves, when it is they who are the thieves. Would they submit if we took the gold mine which is dug on the next hillside, on land which is by rights fairly

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ours? Yet they claim the borax mine on our land, and blame us for wishing to defend it."

The meeting broke up in this spirit which was general among them, a sense of wrong and injustice aroused by a new cause, but become habitual through the experience of years.

Antonio drew a long breath when he found himself at last alone beneath the stars. Returned to this land of crystalline atmosphere, he wondered at the brilliancy of the heavens. All the unfamiliar stars of the fifth and sixth magnitudes, obscured in countries of humid skies, came out here, and took their rightful places, changing the outline of the constellations. The milky way shone with the light of a second moon. Antonio thought of Belmont, and its lovers, and its starlit sky. His heart thrilled now as it had never done before at the memory of the restrained passion of Lorenzo's speeches. He realized heights and depths where his thought had never penetrated, infinities of feeling which were as remote from him as the infinities of distance in which the planets move. Was he happier because he could apprehend what had been hidden? Was he more fortunate than his fellows to whom these patines of bright gold were only twinkling lights, since he knew the laws of astronomy, and had covered

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pages with the calculations of the higher mathematics? "Yes, yes," he answered to himself. "I suffer more, but it is godlike to suffer with open eyes. If only I may make something of my life so that it shall be worth while."

He walked past the school-house, through whose open windows he saw Dorothea and her aunt in the little front room, where the light of the lamp shone full on the girl's head, turning her red-brown hair to burnished gold. Her eyes were bright with animation as she talked. Antonio paused involuntarily, and stood looking at her as he had often stood lost in contemplation before a picture in the Dresden gallery. A footstep startled him, and turning quickly he found Burke at his side.

"It is my Indian friend," said Burke. "Is your name Lachusa?"

"Yes," answered Antonio. "And yours?"

"Oh, I am Mr. Burke."

"I have heard of you," said Antonio. "You are Mr. Wilson's lawyer."

"They have already told you about me," said Burke, smiling, "and nothing good, I am sure. But a lawsuit, you know, is not a matter of sentiment. I must do my duty. They tell me, Lachusa, that you are remarkably well educated. Now I should like to feel that I might depend

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upon you to influence the others of the tribe, who are as ignorant and emotional as children, to take a common-sense view of this matter. I think I can promise that Mr. Wilson would be willing to settle the matter out of court, and even to pay a little for the disputed land, though it would be like paying for his own."

"Of what use would be the money?" asked Antonio. "It would be spent soon, half of it for drink which is furnished illegally to my people by Mr. Wilson's son-in-law. We could not buy new homes, and the old people, the women and children would be cast adrift. No, Mr. Burke, the land is ours, and you seek to rob us of it under the name of the law. We must fight you at law if we can, though we are poor and ignorant, and you are rich and wise."

They had walked up the road during this conversation, and were now opposite the Casa Blanca gardens, where the white house gleamed fairy-like through the trees, and the sound of a piano thunderously executing a movement of *Die Walküre* came through the still night air.

"But you are an exception," remarked Burke. "You are both rich and wise."

"I was left without a penny," answered Antonio. "The will which I once saw drafted on paper was never signed. But what does it

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matter? It is possible to do much without money."

"No, there you are mistaken," said Burke. "Poverty is a crime or the imputation of one. If you are to fight me at law the first thing you must do is to look about for means to raise it. Mrs. Aguilar, of course, will be your friend. She thinks she has found the means through an Indian Association, formed of certain sentimental people in the East who love the poor Indian and are interested in his affairs. I tell you this because she herself will tell it to you when you meet her. But I would suggest that you do not depend too much on this aid. Sentiment is a fine thing, but it has its limitations, usually at the point where it attacks the pocketbook."

"Mrs. Leigh was president of an Indian Association," said Antonio. "I have sometimes spoken at their meetings. I might still have some influence. Thank you for the idea."

"You may have it for what it is worth," said Burke. "I will leave you here. Think over what I have said. After to-morrow I will begin the suit. It will then be too late for a compromise."

CHAPTER III

When Burke returned from his stroll in the starlight he found Mrs. Jennings at the piano, while her husband at the further end of the room was engaged in an animated conversation with his sister-in-law.

"Oh, Mr. Burke," called Bessie, as he entered and approached her, "Sam has a piece of news for you. Your princess is not a princess, after all. We have decided that we can not even call upon her."

Burke felt his heart throb with an undefinable anxiety, not from the manner of the threat, but because something told him that he was punished for mentioning Dorothea's name in this society. As he had seen her again at a glimpse through the school-house window, she had appeared to him like a dainty flower transplanted into an uncongenial soil, but rearing itself bravely against the elements.

"What do you mean?" he inquired, as carelessly as he might.

"Why, Ed Fairfax is an old chum of mine," said Mr. Jennings. "I know him from A to Z. Do you know why he lives in South

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America? It is because he prefers the climate to that of Canada," and he gave a harsh laugh which Bessie echoed musically.

"Go on, Sam, explain," she said. "Mr. Burke looks skeptical."

"Well, in plain English, he robbed a bank where he was cashier, after repeatedly forging his father's name on drafts, and was saved from the penitentiary only by the indulgence of the old man, whom he drove into his grave. He is a blackleg and a sharper, a professional gambler, as well as a reckless speculator in wild-cat schemes. He has had some correspondence through an agent with my respected father-in-law concerning our property here, the Bonanza Mine. We may make a deal with him if all goes well. Fairfax does not know that I married Wilson's daughter, or even that I am in this part of the world, and I don't want him to know it just yet awhile."

Mrs. Jennings had ended her music when Burke appeared. She now whirled about on the piano-stool and exclaimed: "For reasons of your own, no doubt. Mr. Fairfax knows you, I suppose, as well as you know him."

"See what it is to have an admiring wife," said Jennings—"one so full of love and confidence."

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"Come, come," said Bessie. "Don't quarrel in public. It is not good taste. Well, Mr. Burke, what do you think about it? Don't you see that we can not call on this man's daughter?"

"In that you will, of course, do as you please," Burke answered gravely. "She is a lady, and one of the most attractive girls I have ever met. She will be very lonely if she makes no friends here. I hope you will not prejudice others against her. She can not be held responsible for her father's sins."

"But I shall think it my duty to tell my friends what I know of her family," said Bessie, piously.

"Oh, her family's all right as far as that goes," said Jennings. "Aguilar was always boasting of his blue blood. He was her uncle, you know; and the Fairfaxes are very respectable. Ed was the black sheep. I have nothing against the girl, and Nell may call on her if she likes, if she will promise to contrive that Miss Fairfax does not mention my name in her letters to her father. This is very important."

"Why should I call?" replied his wife. "Mrs. Aguilar has never been on my visiting list, and her niece is more nearly Bessie's age than mine. The matter absolutely does not concern me."

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"Well, then, let us drop the subject," said her sister.

Burke forced himself to appear at ease and interested in the further conversation of the evening; but his blood was hot within him. Never had the injustice of petty standards and narrow judgments seemed to him so inexcusable. Never had the sisters appeared in so unamiable a light. The affluent good-nature which prevailed at Casa Blanca had been one of the advantages which had counterbalanced a certain homely vulgarity in the minds and manners of the family there. They were good-hearted people, he told himself, enjoying their newly acquired wealth and the prestige it gave them in that limited society, and willing to share enjoyment and spread good-will about them. Of late the atmosphere of the place had changed, or was it that he himself was disenchanted? The family skeleton which rumor had long assigned to a place in the Jennings apartments had come somewhat shamelessly into view. The controversy with the Indians had served to embitter Mr. Wilson. Bessie, who had always commanded Burke's admiration, had become, under the disturbing influence of Dorothea's entrance into her social horizon, both unreasonable and unkind.

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Mrs. Jennings's keen eyes noted Burke's altered mood, though Bessie, with a young girl's happy obliviousness to everything beneath the surface, was quite unaware that her liveliest sallies were no longer of effect. When they met on the landing of the stairs for a moment while good-nights were being exchanged, Mrs. Jennings bent near him and murmured: "If it will please you, Harry, I will call on Miss Fairfax. You are like a child with a new toy. You have been sulking all the evening because we will not admire it as much as you do. Is she really charming enough to make you forget Auld Lang Syne?"

"The toy is not mine," he replied; "I have no claim."

"Except that of discoverer," she answered. "You have found out that she is a lady, and that we are barbarians. You used to praise the simplicity of our life here, and find the genial warmth of our climate reflected in our natures. Ah, the good old times! How easy it is for a man to forget!"

She looked down upon him, the light of the candle which she held falling full upon her face and revealing the pathetic droop of the mouth, and the glint of tears in her eyes.

Burke, distinctly remembering the past, knew

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that she exaggerated the importance of the admiration which he had given and the terms upon which their acquaintance had been founded. Questioning himself seriously in the solitude of his room, he could not feel that he had been to blame, that he had trifled with her, or that at any time he had given more than the natural share of homage due from a young man to a pretty girl whom he meets daily. That one day he had awakened to the consciousness that he was being urged beyond his intentions by the pressure of circumstances, that he had detached himself to a certain extent from Casa Blanca and its inmates, and that Eleanor's marriage to Mr. Jennings had been viewed by many in the light of a heart tragedy, with himself as principal actor, he knew, having often bitterly reviewed the case without bringing himself to judgment. Since then Mrs. Jennings had chosen to maintain an attitude which often annoyed him, but to which he perforce submitted. She made it appear that all that had been suspected and implied had actually existed, that he had loved hopelessly, and that an unkind fate had divided them. It was to avoid this position that he had attached himself openly to Bessie during his frequent visits at Casa Blanca, making her the object of his atten-

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tions at the risk of repeating with the younger sister the misunderstanding of his motives. While honest examination led him to seek his bed that night with a clear conscience, Mrs. Jennings lay awake, dry-eyed but heart-stricken, while Bessie felt the anger of jealousy, than which nothing is more cruel, and marked the unconscious Dorothea as its victim.

Mrs. Aguilar wondered that the neighbors were slow in calling upon her niece, and she was both pleased and relieved when Mrs. Jennings, in summer finery and plumed hat, tripped down the dusty road one afternoon and knocked at the school-house door. She seated herself in the chair offered with enthusiasm by Mrs. Aguilar, and surveyed Dorothea with deliberate criticism. She recognized that she was not only beautiful enough to be her rival in Burke's fancy, but also that she had the indefinable air of distinction which had impressed him.

"You seem to be out of place here, Miss Fairfax," she said. "You ought not to live in a two-roomed house, and your hands are quite too pretty to spoil with work."

Before Dorothea had appeared she had been visible in the rear room engaged in the homely occupation of washing dishes.

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"You are quite right," exclaimed Mrs. Aguilar. "Dolly is used to something so different. I fear she will not stay with me long."

Dorothea was a little embarrassed by this opening of the conversation, but she answered frankly: "Of course one misses luxuries that have always seemed necessities; but it is good for us to learn how the other half lives, and everything is comparative. Our simplicity seems luxury to these Indians."

"Oh, the Indians do not interest me at all," said Mrs. Jennings. "But if you stay in this house you will hear of nothing else. Mrs. Aguilar thinks them perfection."

"Hardly that," said the teacher. "But I wish to help them in the weary way upward. They have taken the first step towards better things. The next should be easier for them."

"Well, do not let us talk about them," said Mrs. Jennings, "for they bore me to death. Papa is in a rage over their obstinacy which will make it necessary for him to go to court in town these hot, dusty days. Then Mr. Burke is there so much that we see nothing of him. You have met Mr. Burke, I believe?" and she looked keenly at Dorothea.

"Yes, I drove with him several miles at the

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time of the hold-up, and again when I went to attend the inquest. He was very kind about making that as easy for me as possible. I have not seen him lately."

"Nor have I for that matter," was the answer. "We are such old friends that we really think it strange if we do not meet six times a week."

"I hear some interesting rumors about Miss Bessie," said Mrs. Aguilar, smiling. "I believe she will not remain Miss Bessie very long."

Mrs. Jennings answered coldly: "People will gossip in a little country place. It is the only amusement they have. But Mr. Burke is decidedly not a marrying man."

Dorothea pondered this statement, which seemed somewhat enigmatical. Mrs. Jennings struck her as an eccentric person, and that lady, feeling instinctively that she was not making as favorable an impression as she had meant, began to talk about general topics in a friendly way. At last she said, "One thing is so odd, Miss Fairfax. My husband used to know your father intimately years ago."

Dorothea's face brightened at the mention of her father.

"But the strange thing about it is that Sam is particularly anxious that your father should

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not hear of this from you, so please be careful in your letters not to mention it, or even to let him know that Samuel K. Jennings lives within a hundred miles of you. I don't know Sam's reason for this. He seems to have some grudge against your father, in a business way no doubt. Large speculators are always likely to make enemies in business, you know, and your father is a sort of Napoleon of finance, I believe. He is negotiating for the purchase of the Bonanza Mine here, it seems, and Sam would not have him know for the world that he is connected with it. I speak of this as something that may interest you, but of course you will not repeat it."

Without waiting for Dorothea's reply she rose and took her leave.

"What a curious woman Mrs. Jennings is!" said the girl, musingly.

"She is a very unhappy woman, as married to such as man she must be," replied her aunt. "She married out of spite, and a woman who will do that must expect to break her heart. She was engaged, they say, to Harry Burke, and he broke it off, or they quarreled, and she married Sam Jennings within a month."

"Could Mr. Burke do such a thing?" asked Dorothea.

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"No, I do not believe it," said Mrs. Aguilar. "If it were so, he would not be calling constantly at the house, and be paying his addresses, as they say, to her sister."

"Perhaps it is Mrs. Jennings whom he cares for still," thought Dorothea, but she said nothing, and within an hour was engaged in writing as follows to her father:

"I miss you constantly. The life here is so different from anything I have known. I am set down in a little valley among the mountains, and the horizon of my experience is as limited as possible, yet even here dramas of destiny are being played, interesting enough to those concerned in them, though I am quite an outsider and can do nothing but look on and philosophize. The villain of the play is a Mr. Samuel K. Jennings, whose morals are deplorably bad, though this does not seem to place him beyond the pale of society, since he is the son-in-law of Mr. Jerome Wilson, the rich man of the place. He keeps a store and sells liquor to the Indians, which does not seem to be thought wicked, though it is against the law. I have heard that he used to know you years ago, and that he is very anxious to remain unknown to you. He is interested in your speculations, especially in the sale of the Bonanza

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Mine here. And now, darling papa, I have found you out. If you are planning to buy the mine, it is to come here and live with your own Dorothea. How happy I am at the thought of it! I can hardly wait to receive the answer to this letter. How could you expect to keep a secret from your inquisitive little magpie? Do not try to have secrets from me. I shall find them out, every one."

Cause and effect are proportionate, but the law of accumulated force is so obscure in its application that we sometimes wonder when the fall of the pebble starts the avalanche. Mrs. Jennings's communication was a pebble thrown at random, with no motive except the desire of avenging a hundred petty slights, a hundred stabs of malice, dealt where hatred filled the place of love. Custom and conventionality held her in check, and she could only act against her husband in secret, striking blindly like an angry child; and walking homewards she felt a child's trepidation in the memory of her act of rebellion.

CHAPTER IV

Dorothea had entered with enthusiasm upon her aunt's work of philanthropy. She found much to interest her in the Indian character, whose stolid reserve did not preclude a quick responsiveness to kindly influences. She believed that an impersonal sympathy for the unfortunate prompted her to throw herself with eagerness into her new duties; but if she had known her heart she would have recognized the concrete motive which is not far to seek in a woman's deed.

A climbing vine will set a tendril swinging in circles, vague of purpose until it strikes the object of its unconscious search, when straightway it will coil into a quick activity. A young girl's heart possesses such a swinging tendril; and without realizing it, Dorothea had made Burke the object of its direction. Slight associations connected her thought with him. The memory of his looks and words lay deep within her mind. An accident of revelation might have tightened the bond; but before she was aware of it, this vague tie had been rudely

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broken. Mrs. Jennings had hinted at a romance to which the girl's quick imagination readily supplied outline and color. She had learned by this accident the secret of Burke's unhappy attachment; and, although she pitied him, it lessened him in her estimation. He no longer perfectly deserved her instinctive sympathy.

It was possible, she considered, for a man to love for a lifetime a woman who by some unhappy fate had become another's wife; but such a love ought, then, to be a chrism consecrating him to eminent nobility. He should never lightly touch another woman's hand, never smile admiringly into another's eyes. His love to be worthy must be kept sacred. If false to it, he was false to everything. Such reasoning might have its flaws, but it was conclusive to Dorothea, to whom it brought sharp pin-pricks of discontent when she remembered Burke's brown eyes and the light that shone within them. Turning for distraction from these thoughts, she found it in the work which lay at hand, the stern reality of grief making her own cares seem the merest vapors of an idle thought.

She forgot Burke when she fed the hungry and tended the sick and dying. She found interest in watching the development of the

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little dark-skinned scholars, and in conversing with Antonio Lachusa, the depths of whose mind she could not sound with any plummet of her own possessing, but whose reverential attention, as he followed her slightest words, and the enthusiasm of his appreciation, were sweet to her.

One morning she descended the hill while the fog still hung like a silver mantle upon the shoulder of the mountain, and the quail were calling upon the hillside, where they had nested and taught their young to fly.

She entered the door of the dark adobe hut in which she was now a frequent visitor; and she found, as always of late, both Antonio and his sister bent above a bed of blankets where the small Fernando, Marta's child, lay gasping his life away. Antonio sprang to his feet, and met her with a bow and a sudden brightening of his dark eyes; while Marta raised her head and nodded solemnly.

"The doctor was here again last evening. What did he say?" asked Dorothea.

"That it is only a question of a day or two," replied Antonio. "Nothing more can be done. We have watched through the night together, for though I begged Marta to sleep she would not shut her eyes. To-day I must go down to

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Hilton, but Felipe's wife will come in to-night. Marta must have rest, or she will be ill."

"I will stay with her to-night," said Dorothea.

Antonio's face glowed, and Marta, bending her head, began to weep silently.

"It is what she has been wishing for," said Antonio—"that you should be with the child when he dies. Not even Mrs. Aguilar is such a comfort to her. She says that when little Fernando was well he would always laugh when you spoke to him. She thinks he can know you even now; and she will not allow the Indian women, our neighbors, so much as to look at him. They are all angry with her about it. She says their wails frighten the child, and she will not adopt the remedies they suggest, since she has more faith in the doctor you have sent to attend him. What grieves her most is that Fernando has not been baptized. The priest comes here only once a year, sometimes not even that. He has not been here since the child was born; and though Mrs. Aguilar tells her that she herself or good old Pedro may baptize him in case of necessity, Marta fears that the child cannot be happy in eternity unless the Church receives him in baptism. I am going to Hilton to telegraph to the priest to

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come; but if he does not, you will comfort her, will you not?"

He looked lovingly at his sister as he spoke, and she followed him with eyes of devotion while he said his farewells and left the hut.

The grandmother came in soon after, and bent to scrutinize the child.

"Stand aside, Nana," said Marta, querulously. "Your shadow falls upon him. The doctor says he must have sunlight and air."

"But he can have neither here," said Dorothea, who understood the Spanish that Marta used, and answered her in it, while with Antonio she had spoken in English. "Shall we not carry him out into the air? It is so fresh and fragrant now."

"No," said Marta; "I will not leave the house. Here, when people come, I can shut my door upon them. Outside they would crowd about, and each would have some reason with which to explain his illness or some remedy for me to try. Old Diego is medicine-man, but he is so old that he has nearly lost his mind, and I have no faith in him. He wishes me to bind an amulet of eagle feathers tied to a stick upon him, and to grease him with the sacred rattlesnake oil. I would gladly do this if I dared to disobey the priest, who told me

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once that these amulets were the same as idols, and that we did wrong to put faith in the medicine-men; but if Fernando dies all my people will tell me it is because I denied Diego; yet I would not dare to displease the priest, at least until the child is baptized. After that he would be safe."

The torture of Marta's mind, hesitating between two opposing beliefs, struck Dorothea as pathetic in the extreme; but she could not suggest any other consolation than the hope that the priest would come in time.

She left, repeating her promise to return, since Marta persistently refused the ministrations of her neighbors.

Mrs. Aguilar did not oppose her niece's benevolent purpose, and when the full moon rose Dorothea took her way by a little winding path which made a short-cut behind the garden of Casa Blanca to the isolated corner where Marta's hut stood in its tiny corn patch. As she came from the shadow into the brilliant light, Burke, who had been standing at an angle of the path, advanced to meet her.

"It is so long since I have seen you," he said, offering his hand with a radiant smile. "Your aunt quarreled with me about the lawsuit, and almost forbade me her house. I should have

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risked her anger, and have called upon you, however, if I had been here; but I have been at court in town, and this is my first visit to Casa Blanca in two weeks."

"Your friends must have missed you greatly," said Dorothea.

"But you, you have not cared at all. Of course not, since I am only a new acquaintance to you; yet I cannot explain to you what you have become to me in the comparatively short time that I have known you. Lately I have thought of you constantly, and have felt a certain anxiety about you, as if you were in a position where you needed my help—why I can hardly tell. But I fear that you do not find the society at Casa Blanca exactly congenial to you."

"Society, if that means the Wilsons and their circle, has left me for the most part alone. I have exchanged a few formal calls."

"I feel half-responsible for your disappointment in us," said Burke, "for I told you that we were genial, warm-hearted people who could be counted upon to be good neighbors; and, as a rule, it is so in California much more than elsewhere. The perpetual sunshine warms our souls. But this unfortunate lawsuit has set people by the ears. The Wilsons are angry at

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your aunt for her enthusiastic championship of the Indians, and they include you in that, I suppose."

"Their opinion is not of the slightest consequence to me," she replied. "As individual characters, I consider Marta Lachusa and her brother vastly superior to the Wilsons."

"And you are going to watch to-night with Marta's child," said Burke, gently. "Leonore, who cooks at the Wilsons, told me that, and I lay in wait for you. I honor you for your warmth of heart, though I wish it did not carry you so far. You should not roam about at night alone."

"I am sure it is quite safe," she answered. "The Indians are peaceable and harmless. They all know and like me."

"They are always harmless unless they are drunk," said Burke. "That entirely transforms their character."

"And it is Mr. Jennings who sells them the liquor. Oh, Mr. Burke, I have seen so many unfortunate results of it. Instead of bringing a lawsuit to drive the Indians from their homes, you should be engaged in prosecuting that man."

"I wish it could be done," he answered. "He is my particular *bête noire*."

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Dorothea suddenly remembered her suspicion concerning Burke's unforgotten attachment for Mr. Wilson's elder daughter.

"How beautiful the moonlight is!" Burke remarked. "Why is it that the moon seems made to shine for youthful lovers? I am no longer young, but still——"

"Was that a snake?" cried Dorothea, as a black shadow glided sinuously across the path.

"No doubt; a harmless gopher snake, most likely. Are you afraid of them?"

"Not as a rule," she replied, "but for some reason the sight of it made my blood run cold."

"The half-light makes you nervous," he remarked. "As I was saying, I had almost believed that I had grown too old to love. In youth, it comes to us as a vague and beautiful dream, which touches the imagination more deeply than it does the heart. But when in middle life it comes upon a man like a sudden revelation, it is an imperious passion for which he would risk the world. Do you know, Dorothea, there are plants that send up stalk, bud and blossom in a single night? Do you believe that there are cases of love at first sight?"

Her heart beat fast with surprised agitation. Suspecting that these were the words of a

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trifler, she did not care to magnify their importance by a reply. Fear as well as prudence led her to ignore them.

Burke was content to leave his thought half spoken, for he realized that he might offend her by too great precipitancy; though his present purpose was the logical outcome of the serious reflection of days and weeks. Since he had first met her, Dorothea had been the object of his constant thought. The slight anxiety which he felt concerning her happiness had served to fix his mind continually upon her. The freshness of her youthful beauty appealed to him with that suddenness of charm which is caused by a flower, a sunset, a burst of melody. She suggested all beauty, and was a part of it. Life seemed a monotonous desert as it stretched behind him; the future a dreary waste if it must be passed without her. He was amazed at the strength of this new passion which filled his heart. Through its very unexpectedness it became an exquisite joy. His fancy lingered upon it, sipping the intoxication drop by drop. He was not too young to be self-conscious, and he realized the promise of every moment that should unfold his hopes. He saw no reason for fear or self-distrust; no impediment in his path except the shy instinct of a girl's reserve, which

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it would be the sweetest task for manly love to vanquish step by step.

The dreary routine of his daily work was glorified by blissful dreams. He wrote German poetry upon the margins of his briefs.

Thou little youthful maiden,
Come into my great heart;
For my heart and the sea and the heaven
Are melting away with love.

When at last he met her in the moonlight he had to remind himself that her ignorance of his heart laid a careful restraint upon him. "Perhaps I have spoken too hastily," he thought. "I will be patient. That 'little youthful maiden' shall have her own sweet way with me;" and he walked homeward through the summer night as if he trod on air.

Dorothea, entering the hut, found Marta huddled upon the floor in the chiaroscuro of the candle beam invaded by the shadow of the narrow room. Her eyes were fixed in a terrible stare which the sight of her visitor did not relieve.

"What is it, Marta?" she asked.

"I am sure the padre will not come," was the answer, in the very accent of despair, "and then

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my child, my innocent child, must suffer in fire forever."

"Oh, no, Marta; it is not true. The priest could not tell you that. You did not understand him. The dear Lord loves little children. He held them in His arms. He never could condemn an innocent thing. If He takes your child it will be safe with Him."

The earnestness of Dorothea's tone, the warmth of sympathy which her look expressed, soothed the mother's heart. Her mind was unconvinced, but with a childish acceptance of a present comfort, she allowed herself to be diverted from her fears.

Dorothea sat upon the floor and held the little Fernando in her arms. He opened his dull eyes and smiled into her face.

"There, there," said Marta, beginning to weep with joy, "it is the first sign of life he has given all day. It is a good omen; he will get well."

Dorothea remained still and rigid, hardly daring to breathe for fear of disturbing the soft slumber into which he now sank. Marta stretched her weary limbs beside her, and, worn by long watching, herself fell asleep.

The hours dragged slowly. The moonlight waned and gave place to the first flush of dawn,

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and as the candle flared and sputtered in its socket Dorothea noticed a change in the child's face. She had never seen death, but she recognized its presence; and she woke Marta, who started at a word.

"Call Angela," she said quietly. "He will not live till the priest comes."

Marta ran distracted into the open air. In the moment of anguish she begged help of all she met. Old Diego was awakened and entreated to bring the amulet and the oil. Marta grovelled before her offended neighbors and begged them to come and wail with her that the evil spirits might be frightened away and her child's departing soul escape them. She asked the prayers of the pious Pedro, and that he should bring his rosary and the blessed candles left over from the Easter Services.

Urged by her entreaties for haste, the neighbors crowded into the narrow hut, and there they found Dorothea seated with an uplifted face of solemn thought, and the dead child stretched upon her knees.

"His breath went in a little sigh, Marta," she said, "but do not be frightened. I baptized him with the water from the *olla* just as I saw it was the last moment; and I prayed to the dear Lord to receive him. He is as safe as

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if the priest had used the holy water and oil and salt, and said every prayer. Trust what I say.”

Later in the day Dorothea took a long walk over the hills. She could not rest within doors. The look in Marta’s eyes haunted her. She wanted time to think; to let her little plummet into the depths of that unknown sea on whose borders we all stand wondering.

She sat down on the dry grass beneath an oak tree, whose fallen leaves made a carpet beneath the spreading boughs without diminishing the living verdure of its crown of green. She leaned against a rock and looked up at the sky, where, at a great height, motionless cirrus clouds had taken the shape of tall white lilies standing rank on rank, the asphodels of heaven. Watching them, her eyes grew heavy. By degrees her head sank lower, and in the stillness of the encompassing solitude she fell asleep.

Antonio had returned from a fruitless errand. The priest could not leave his work in the city to make a visitation upon this outlying quarter of his parish at an unaccustomed season simply because a young Indian child was dying. An-

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tonio would have been surprised if he had prospered in his quest. He had gone with the sole intention of pleasing his sister, who had become deeply endeared to him by their common care of Fernando, who had wound himself about his uncle's heart. By one of those compensations which underlie the evils of fate, this child had been for a short time the sunlight of two lives.

When Antonio reached the rancheria and heard that Fernando was dead he had no courage to meet his sister, so he took his rifle and made his way up the hillside, following an unfrequented path; and thus came suddenly in sight of Dorothea asleep beneath the oak.

At the moment he stopped electrified by terror, while the blood froze in his veins. Upon the flat rock close to her head a rattlesnake had slid to sun itself, and disturbed in its siesta by some instinctively uneasy movement of the sleeper, it had coiled itself, and with uplifted head and sounding rattle was preparing to strike at its unconscious victim.

Antonio raised his rifle. "Pray God she does not waken," he thought, as he took aim and fired.

The report roused Dorothea, while a detached splinter of rock slightly wounded her forehead.

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The rattlesnake had fallen headless upon the ground. Antonio, rifle in hand, rushed forward at her scream.

"You have shot me," she exclaimed. "How could you fire so near me? How wickedly careless you have been!" and half-sobbing with fright she wiped a few drops of blood from her forehead.

Antonio bent over her to assure himself of the trivial nature of the wound; then he picked up the rattlesnake and pointed to its shattered neck.

"It lay there on the rock," he said, "ten inches from your face. It was about to strike, and I shot its head off."

Dorothea sprang to her feet, and in the sudden reaction from her terror, extended her hands in gratitude.

"You shot it, Antonio, and saved my life! How can I thank you? How brave, how good, how clever you are! No one else could have done it."

She trembled with nervous excitement, and stood looking down upon the mangled snake as if it still possessed the fascination of active malignity. She did not notice that Antonio, from excess of humility, had refused to accept her offered hands.

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"It was hard," he replied, "but I knew I could not, must not, fail. Too much was at stake."

"I can never, never thank you," she repeated.

"It is a joy to me; I need no thanks," he answered. "It gives me a reason to be glad that I have lived."



CHAPTER V

Antonio was working in an uplying field which commanded a wide view of the mountains lying naked and scarred beneath the dazzling sun. There was no glamour in the morning light. The chaparral was withered and dusty; the flowers had faded from the mesas; but his heart was glad as he worked. This was the nature which he loved. These rocky heights were more beautiful than wooded hills. The barren mesas were more satisfying to his eyes than a velvet lawn. In such a scene the imagination is stirred by possibilities withheld, as a woman charms most who piques by her denials.

Antonio was grubbing greasewood roots from stubborn ground. Two antiquated oxen assisted in his work. The sweat started upon his forehead, and the animals panted at the task; but Antonio had no mind to complain of its difficulties. At a dollar a day he felt well paid, and his fancies sang like birds within him.

Supplementing every source of joy was the consciousness that he loved. It was a hopeless

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love, "the desire of the moth for the star"; but happy in the very quality which raised it above the doubts and fears of passion and rendered it invulnerable to rebuff. Antonio knew no wish as yet except that he might serve Dorothea, and the joy that set his pulses bounding was the consciousness that he had saved her life.

She could never forget him. Every happiness which the years might bring her was a gift from his hand.

When the sun marked high noon he unyoked his oxen and led them to rest in the shelter of a solitary oak. He threw some barley-hay upon the ground for them, and sat down to lunch on half a loaf of bread, with water from his canteen, and thus refreshed began to meditate upon the problems of his life.

He knew that he owed it to himself not to degenerate into a mere grubber of roots. Cincinnatus at the plough was Cincinnatus prepared to lead men. Antonio was ambitious for himself and for his race. Since his return he had studied conditions at the reservation, and had decided that his people needed a leader. They were Israelites waiting for their Moses. Poverty was their tyrant.

He was not sure that they were prepared to accept him as their head, for with the loss of

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his fortune he had lost prestige among them, suffering that imputation which always attaches an added stigma to failure. The elders, moreover, suspected in him a lack of sympathy with the traditions of the past.

With the younger men he had some influence, for they regarded him with deference as one who had acquired a measure of that right for which all instinctively yearned, the right to think, and be, and act on a level with the white man.

The annual election for Captain of the tribe was soon to be held. Antonio was preparing a canvas, having offered himself for the office. He was wondering what he should do if elected; how best to serve the interests of his people. The lawsuit decided in their favor (as in justice it must be), the coveted borax mine would be at their disposal. Intelligent management might so direct it as to remove forever the shadow of famine that hung upon the reservation. Each man should have a common share, and all should have enough. Then education must reach beyond the scope of the government school. A university should be founded in which youth might be trained to the status required for intelligent citizenship, which could not always be denied his race. All of these schemes might become realities if he possessed

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his millions. Now he recognized that they were only dreams. But as he yoked his oxen to the plough and resumed his work, he felt a joyous consciousness of power, and a belief that the shaping of his future could offer no more difficulty than the upturning of the gnarled and stubborn roots which were to furnish his employer with a store of winter fuel.

At sunset he took his fellow laborers to their well-earned rest, carefully watering them at the brook in the pasture before presenting himself at the ranch-house to receive his dollar; then he made his way homeward by a short-cut through the chaparral; not an easy way, for the tough branches of the greasewood smote him, the manzanita tugged at his hair, and in more open spaces the white-sage brushed him closely, anointing him with its aromatic scent, to which the black-sage and blue-curls added yet heavier perfumes as he plunged through the fragrant thickets which overspread the hill-sides, offering incense to the sun.

At the foot of the hill near the school-house he came upon an agitated crowd, the centre of which was a wagon wherein sat those older members of the tribe who had been summoned to town as witnesses and principals in the law-suit. His heart bounded anxiously.

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"How did it go, José?" he cried, peering over interposing heads and shoulders. José recognized the voice, and turned his head in sullen despair.

"Lost, lost," he replied; and a groan followed the words; but before Antonio could continue a new speaker took up the thread of an interrupted discourse. It was to him, and not to the dignitaries in the wagon, that the people were listening with that intensity of attention which is more flattering than applause.

"Who is he?" asked Antonio of his neighbor in the crowd, Felipe, as it chanced.

"A new-comer, Marco by name," was the answer, "a clever man who will right our wrongs."

"A ranting demagogue," commented Antonio, uneasily.

It was evident that Marco held his audience, and interruption would be ineffectual. His was the tongue of the glib orator, ready with specious arguments of the sort that dazzle ignorance and confound wishes with probabilities. His premise was the fact fondly believed and founded upon history, that the land from horizon to horizon belonged to the Indian people. His conclusion was that it was to be restored to them by the government at Wash-

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ington, that vast central power known only by its workings, which were as absolute and incomprehensible as the forces of nature; and the gist of the matter was that it was through him, Marco, the trusted counsellor and go-between, that Washington was to treat with the tribe at Casa Blanca.

The law could not be relied upon to do them justice—witness the infamous decree just promulgated to drive them from their homes; but Marco would go direct to Washington and lay the matter before the President. Money was necessary for his journey, and this his audience were prepared to furnish, the hat being already in rapid circulation; and the poorest man present, in rags and lacking a meal, was stripping himself of a day's earnings to contribute his mite. Antonio made his way to the fore, and mounting upon the wagon-step, demanded attention.

"Do not believe a man whose first appeal is for money," he said, in the language of the tribe. Marco had used Spanish, a vile patois at that. "This man is a deceiver. He is not even of our tribe. He is the sort of man who fattens on the misery of others. The President has no use for his advice. Such as he have no influence at Washington."

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Here, as if by accident, Antonio was jostled from his perch. The horses that had stood passive with dejectedly hanging heads now started forward at the cut of a whip administered by an unseen hand. Marco, who seemed to have foreseen the movement, had swung himself into the wagon and was borne in triumph to the council chamber, where he continued his harangue. Antonio was left with a small following upon the hillside.

"It is no use," said Felipe. "They all believe him. I am not sure myself but that a dollar given to him might be well invested. Something must be done. That is evident. You, Antonio, have neither money nor influence, and can do nothing. We are to lose our homes unless we can raise the six thousand dollars for the appeal."

"Are the bonds fixed at that?" asked Antonio, in surprise.

"Yes; five hundred for Wilson, and six thousand for us. They pretend that it is because there are several of us in the case."

"What injustice!" exclaimed Antonio, under his breath.

"It might as well be six million," continued Felipe. "What a pity you have not your money! They were saying before you came that

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you acted as if you possessed the fortune you expected. You wished to be Captain, and to rule where older heads should have first place. If you had money that would be different. Marco makes definite promises, and he asks nothing except the chance to prove his word. You seek first of all your own advancement."

"It was José who said this?" asked Antonio.

"José, and Diego, and Samuel."

"And Marco suggested it to them?"

"They were talking it over together. Marco might have been Captain if he were born in the tribe."

"Fortunate for us that he is not. Felipe, you are my friend, and I count upon you to call a meeting of the younger men, all who can be influenced, at nine to-night, by the big oak tree in the hollow. I will be there to address you and give you convincing reasons why you should trust me and not Marco. Secure the attendance of a majority of the voters if you can."

By counting without question upon Felipe's fidelity, Antonio, as he intended, confirmed the wavering allegiance of his friend.

At the appointed hour, while Marco was treating his intimates to the forbidden fire-water at Jennings's saloon, while the more

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conservative Indians were dancing the old war dances in unison to mystic wailing chants and the rhythm of the sacred rattle, while the women were wailing over their jeopardized hearthstones; Antonio stood beneath the oak tree and disclosed his purposes to a handful of his comrades.

He appealed to their intelligence, he treated them as men who might one day rank as equals of the white men, and share the privileges of the country whose first-born sons they were. Vain demands and useless complainings would win no favor at Washington. They must use the machinery of the law. An appeal must be filed in the lawsuit, by which they might maintain their rights.

"There is no absolute justice in the matter," he concluded. "We are not here to demand what once was ours, but only that to which we can establish a legal claim. Our wishes can not guide us. We must have a reasonable hope. There is hope in an appeal. Will you trust me? Will you give me your votes? Will you secure me a majority in the election if I succeed in raising the amount of the bonds?"

"Six thousand dollars," commented Felipe, breathlessly. "Yes, yes, if you do that you shall be Captain." So his audience pledged

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themselves in tumultuous enthusiasm, and the meeting broke up.

Through the shadows of the misty mantle which the mountain had drawn about its shoulders, the dwellers on the reservation met and passed at midnight on the homeward path. Marco and his boon companions made the darkness ring with shouts and drunken laughter.

"I choose the post-office land for my share," said old Diego; "the post-office, and the store, and the sweet crackers in the window."

"I'll go halves with you, and take the grog-shop," said another. "Think of it—whiskey, all you want, rivers of whiskey!"

"I'll take the white house," said a younger man. "I'll drive old Wilson out, and burn it down. Whoop, hallo!"

"Drunken dogs!" said one of a couple of horsemen who passed at full gallop, and he laid about him with a riding whip to such effect that the most unsteady of the revellers lost balance and fell in the effort to make way before him, and were saved from the trampling hoofs only by that providence which shields the drunken.

The younger horseman reined his mount long enough to observe that no one had been injured, long enough, therefore, to hear a full share of the curses which fell upon him at recognition;

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then, with a heightened angry color, he followed his friend, and dismounted at the door of Casa Blanca.

"Well, it is no wonder they are angry, Burke," said Mr. Wilson, who had already recovered his good-humor. "Poor devils, they lose, we win; it is the way of the world. Come into the dining-room. I see a light, and from what I know of my girls I guess that on receipt of my telegram they brewed some punch to welcome us. Fact is, I hear a fiddle. They've asked the neighbors in and are dancing. I wonder what they take us for! Perhaps you can ride thirty miles and then dance at midnight. I could when I was young."

"I can hardly dance in riding costume," said Burke.

"But it is very becoming," said Bessie, who had suddenly appeared. "We are all here to congratulate you, Mr. Burke. We will forgive you dust and everything. You are the conquering hero since you have won us our case. I knew you would. You have a lucky star. I believe you win in everything you undertake."

Burke followed her among the merrymakers, a dozen or so, who were whirling to the strident notes of an ill-tuned fiddle. He went the more

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willingly, since through the open door he had caught a glimpse of Dorothea Fairfax.

She had turned pale when she overheard Bessie's words, and she hardly answered Burke's greetings, though his eyes held hers and forced her to recognize the joy he felt at the sight of her.

"It has been so long since I have seen you," he said, noticing how well her evening dress became her, her lovely neck and arms partly revealed among its laces and ribbons.

"I must go home," she stammered.

"But you will dance with me before you go."

"Not if the case has gone against us. Not if all the poor people down there are homeless."

"Do you blame me very much?" asked Burke.

"I am not here at any rate to congratulate you," she answered. "I did not understand Miss Wilson's purpose. I did not know you were expected. I did not know the suit had been decided."

She spoke hurriedly, in agitation. Burke saw that her only wish was to escape.

"I am not going to dance myself," he said. "I am not dressed for it, nor in the humor for it. May I see you home?"

"It is only a step. I can go very well alone," she answered.

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Burke accepted no rebuff, but ran for her shawl, unheeding Bessie's protests except to promise a quick return, foreseeing that he might perjure himself.

Dorothea was passive, absent-minded and unresponsive. Burke recognized with quick alarm a barrier between her thought and his. His late enforced absence had cost him dear; and the victory for which he had worked so eagerly began to look hateful to him.

But Dorothea was young, she was a woman, and Burke was eloquent. Little was lost if she would listen to him, and he opened his mouth to speak; when at the moment two shadows grew out of the darkness beside them.

"Please take my arm," said Burke, "and come upon this side of the road. Some Indians are coming, and they are all drunk to-night, and rude and insulting, as I have found to my cost."

"Not all of them, I am sure," she answered, with a dangerous spark in her eyes. "I happen to recognize these as my friends. I will join them, and say good-night to you."

Burke bit his lip in vexation, as she ran forward and put her arm around the shoulder of a weeping woman who leaned towards her and looked up into her face in an attitude of

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pathetic trust, dumb except in eloquent action. "What is it, Marta?" she asked. "Why is she crying so, Antonio?"

"I came home late," replied Antonio, "and I found that Marta was gone, no one knew where. I have been looking for her everywhere, and I found her at last in the graveyard stretched out on Fernando's grave, praying that she might die now that she can no longer own the ground where he rests."

Marta's sobs burst out afresh.

"But we are going to appeal the case," he continued. "She must not give up yet."

"Oh! can that be done, Antonio?" asked Dorothea, eagerly; and the heads of the two were bent together in discussion as they walked on, forgetting Burke, until words and forms were lost in the darkness.

Burke stood with bowed head and contracted brow, feeling the pain of bitter discomfiture. A strange, unexpected obstacle barred the progress of his hopes. Dorothea saw in him the oppressor of a helpless race in whose cause she had taken arms.

This discovery gave him the terror which a man feels who builds a strong dyke against the ocean only to find that a hidden force has all the while been undermining it. His work for days

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and weeks had been sapping the foundation of his dearest wishes. His triumph in the law-suit which evicted the Indians had thrust him beyond the pale of Dorothea's sympathies.

How could he dream that she should care for them with any personal feeling; could embrace that woman as a sister; could speak to that man as a friend?

A friend! Burke flushed hotly at the thought. He could not be jealous of an Indian; but if he himself were in Antonio's place, destitute, oppressed, appealing hourly to her sympathies, meeting her constantly, what opportunities might he not enjoy, and how richly he should make them yield advantage!

As it was, what could he do? How undo what was done? How justify himself against a prejudice founded upon his own actions? Should he become the champion of Antonio's tribe, and argue upon their side in the appeal?

He gave an uneasy laugh, recognizing the length of folly to which love may lead a man; and with despair in his heart he made his way to the white house, avoiding the music and dancers, and reached his room to seek his bed, but not to sleep.



CHAPTER VI

When he entered the breakfast room next morning the clock marked the hour of ten, and Mrs. Jennings alone was waiting to pour his coffee.

"How good of you!" he said, noticing her pale face and heavy eyes, and the tremor of her hands as she busied herself to serve him.

"The servants are all in a huff to-day," she said. "I wonder we dare trust them not to poison us. What can you expect if you employ Indians, savages, whose civilization will never be more than skin deep?"

Burke gave an uneasy glance at the form of the Indian cook, who was vindictively clattering the dishes in the pantry.

"Oh, never mind Leonore," continued Mrs. Jennings. "She has been discharged for impertinence an hour ago. She had some trouble with Bessie, and perhaps it is Bessie who is the savage. She is a storm-cloud, a cyclone, this morning. You would better keep out of her way, Harry. It is you who have offended her, and the rest of us must suffer."

"What have I done?" asked Burke.

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"You do not remember last night? Bessie gave a party in your honor; she invited Miss Fairfax to please you; she made every concession. And how did you treat her? Miss Fairfax left with hardly a good-night to us all. You went with her, and did not reappear."

"I plead guilty," said Burke.

"It is not I who am angry with you," said Mrs. Jennings, with a sudden change of tone. "I have been talking against time. Now that Leonore is out of hearing I have something to say. Look there."

She pushed back the heavy hair which she wore crimped low upon the forehead, a new and unbecoming fashion, and revealed a deep red wound cut in the flesh just above the temple.

"Sam struck me with his whip," she explained; "struck me like a dog."

Burke exclaimed in indignant anger.

"Yes, it has come to that," she continued. "I shall get my divorce now without trouble. But, Harry, my heart is broken. I am degraded in my own eyes to think that I have been the wife of such a man. He accused me of caring for you, and you of coming here to visit me. I can not tell you what he said; and it is all such nonsense. You never loved me like that, even in the old days."

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There was eager interrogation in her voice, but Burke did not note it. He was frowning and tracing patterns on the tablecloth.

"No, no," he answered. "We were good friends, that was all."

She drew a long, quavering breath, and sat bending forward with her hands tightly clasped, and her shining eyes keenly regarding him.

"You kissed me once under the mistletoe, I remember," she declared.

Burke looked up quickly.

"But such a kiss means nothing," she continued.

"I have done many foolish things in my life," said Burke, "but nothing, I hope, that does not prove me your true friend."

"I give you credit for that," she answered. "You are not the sort of a man to know a great love. It is perhaps because your ideals are too high. Most women seem to you like empty-headed dolls. You might make them your playthings, but not your wife."

"Have I been that sort of a man?" said Burke. "It is a despicable character, I think. Perhaps I have not known myself. At any rate, my punishment has come. At thirty-two I am deeply, passionately, hopelessly in love."

Mrs. Jennings sank back upon her chair.

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Her breath came quickly between parted lips.
Her eyes were suffused with tender tears.

"I love Dorothea Fairfax," he added, averting his look from her tell-tale face.

Mrs. Jennings sprang from her seat and energetically tugged the bell-rope.

"I am sure that Leonore will not answer," she said, with a half-hysterical laugh; "but if she comes please make her wait on you. It is so late, and I am very busy. Forgive me if I leave you."

She swept out of the room, the rustle of her silken morning-gown dying away upon the stairs.

Burke sat as she had left him, with his head upon his hands. Bessie presently appeared upon the threshold, fresh from contact with the outer air, a waft of which she brought with her.

"Good morning, Mr. Burke," she said. "You look blue enough to put me in a good humor. I have been in a devil of a temper all the morning. If you are sad I am glad. Let us make up."

She held out her hand, and Burke took it. "I did not know that we had quarreled," he said.

"Yes, every one has been upset," she answered. "The Indians are making things

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hideous at the reserve. Nell and Sam have had another fight. This time she means to get a divorce, but that is an old story. You offended me deeply last night; but on second thoughts I will not scold you. I am easily vexed, but I do not bear malice. And Miss Fairfax has gone, and to-day I shall have you all to myself. So that is revenge enough."

She sat down beside him, and laughed at his look of eager inquiry. "Where has she gone? I don't know. She did not confide in me. She went with her aunt for chaperon, and Antonio Lachusa for escort; and they had a lot of luggage, and seemed to be starting as tourists. José drove them in the farm wagon, and they went early enough to meet the stage. So I have told you all I know. Thank me for that."

"I do thank you, Bessie," said Burke, "for that and for everything. You have been better to me than I deserve. And now you must forgive me for hurrying off to catch the train. I have not a moment to lose. Please make my farewells to your mother."

Bessie walked to the window and watched him with gloomy eyes as he rode post-haste down the avenue and disappeared beyond the turning in the road.

"So this is the end of it all, Mr. Burke," she

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exclaimed under her breath, "for I shall not pine as Nell does. I shall not wear my heart upon my sleeve for anybody. Good-bye and good riddance!"

Saying which, she sank into a chair, buried her head upon her folded arms, and burst into a passion of tears.

Mrs. Aguilar, together with her niece and Antonio Lachusa, had hardly descended from the stage-coach at the station, where the train stood waiting, when Burke rode up and joined them, lifting his hat for greeting. The condition of his horse caused great concern among the stable-men and coterie of idlers on the platform.

"I thought better of you, Mr. Burke," said the hostler, shaking his head. "So fine a piece of horse-flesh."

"It was a hard ride," Burke answered, "but with care he will be all right. I know his mettle. Men and horses can do better than their best if need be."

He leaped aboard as the cars started, and took a seat directly opposite Dorothea, who blushed and averted her eyes after responding to his bow. She sat alone. Her aunt was engaged in conversation with a friend at the further end

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of the car. Antonio was near the door riding backwards and facing Dorothea, so that he observed a motion which she made and came at her command.

"Do you wish to speak to me?" he asked, raising his hat.

"Yes, sit down beside me, Antonio," she replied. "I have something to say to you."

Burke wondered if she were conscious of the chagrin he felt in the situation and had deliberately planned it. Was it for his benefit that she talked to Antonio with frank upward glances of confidence and goodfellowship given as to an equal? Was she willing that he should overhear the subject of the discussion which seemed to absorb her soul, the consideration of ways and means for raising the six thousand dollars necessary to furnish bonds for the Indians?

He rose and retreated to the rear of the car, taking the now vacant place by Mrs. Aguilar, who received him with a start of surprise.

"I am fortunate in meeting you," said Burke. "Where are you going?"

She hesitated a little before replying. "We are going to visit our lawyer and his wife, the Herefords, at Magnolia ranch, six miles from town."

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"I know the place," said Burke. "Hereford is one of my best friends, and his wife is like a sister to me. I am glad you are to be there."

"She is a dear friend of mine," said Mrs. Aguilar, "and I want Dolly to know her. Mr. Hereford is to advise us how we can best raise the money for an appeal. You are our enemy, yet I suppose there is no harm in telling you that."

"I have been working against Hereford in the case, yet he does not consider me an enemy," said Burke, in a voice hoarse with vexation. "I wonder why you should make it a personal matter."

"Oh, Dolly and I can never forgive you if the Indians are evicted," she answered. "Logic or no logic, that is the way we feel."

"I hope there may be an appeal," said Burke. "Rather than suffer such injustice from you and your niece, I would myself furnish the bonds."

Mrs. Aguilar smiled grimly. "You are making a joke of it," she said, "but you will find that with us it is serious earnest."

"I wish to talk to your niece about it," he said. "Please tell her, if I have not the opportunity, that I hope to call upon her at Magnolia ranch. How long shall you be there?"

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"A week, perhaps," she answered, uneasily.
"But I can tell you frankly, Mr. Burke, that
you will not be welcome."

"A man should have the opportunity to plead
his own cause," said Burke. "I am coming
out this evening to see Hereford on business.
I am not joking, Mrs. Aguilar. To please your
niece I am ready to furnish the bonds if you can
not raise them otherwise."

"But this is too absurd," she said, with
brightening eyes.

"Absurd and illogical," he answered; "but I
love Dorothea better than my reputation for
consistency, of which I shall have little left,
I own. Still, Hereford need not disclose the
identity of his bondsman."

"It seems impossible that you are in earnest,
but if that is your reason I must believe you,"
she answered, with eager interest, glancing from
him to Dorothea, upon whom his eyes rested
with an expression which could not be mis-
understood. "Dolly will be hard to win," she
added.

"I only ask the chance," he said. "You can
help me now. Call Lachusa to you, and allow
me an hour's talk with her."

Mrs. Aguilar shook her head. "It is not safe
to play providence in these matters," she said.

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"You have no confidence in me," he complained.

"It does no man harm to wait. Perhaps Antonio, too, is counting on this hour's talk."

Burke looked down upon her with dilated eyes. "Do I understand that you consider that the Indian yonder, by any conceivable circumstance, could be my rival?" he asked.

The scorn and indignation in his look and tone roused Mrs. Aguilar to the defence of her pet theories, yet shook her soul a little. There is nothing so formidable to a woman as the power of offended conventionality.

"Not that exactly," she replied. "He is most humble, most deferential; he would never presume; and Dorothea is in every way above him—in birth, position, and inherited culture. Yet, still I beg you to remember that Antonio Lachusa is a gentleman in every sense of the word. He is a college graduate, widely travelled, widely read, with the nicest, most refined sensibilities. I have seen him daily, he has opened his heart to me as a friend, and it is the heart of a man for dignity and that of a child for purity. He is my friend, I am proud to call him that; and he is my niece's friend since he saved her life."

"How so?" demanded Burke, with head

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erect, and with little patience for the answer. The situation seemed to him intolerable.

Mrs. Aguilar related the adventure of the rattlesnake.

"Dolly wears the snake skin in a band about her hat, you see," she said. "It is a perpetual reminder of what she owes him."

Burke looked uneasily at the broad sombrero which crowned Dorothea's sunny hair. It was trimmed in fantastic style with a band of mottled rattlesnake skin. She wore an outing suit with shirtwaist and jacket, and about her throat a crimson silk handkerchief was loosely knotted. Antonio also wore a sombrero, and a bright silk handkerchief. So did a jolly group of Indian youths in the rear of the car, who sat three in a seat by preference, with arms about each others' waists. It was the picturesque fashion of the country. Dorothea thus proclaimed herself a daughter of the soil. Burke, whose supersensitive feelings were now alive to every thorn-prick, groaned in spirit.

"Do you realize, Mrs. Aguilar," he said, "that you are responsible to Dorothea's father for the acquaintances she makes and the influence they may exert upon her?"

"My dear boy," she answered, "I pray every night that I may be guided in my duty to her

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and others. Dolly's father is the worst influence her life has ever known, but she has passed unhurt through the furnace, and believes him a hero and a saint. Antonio Lachusa will never do her harm. I would trust him far sooner than many a so-called gentleman whose past is too black a thing for an innocent girl to dream of. He is as pure as Galahad."

"To what length would your prepossession go?" asked Burke, knitting his brow. "At what limit would you stop?"

"I would trust my niece to set the limit," she answered, with dignity. "I feel no authority to interfere."

"Then I shall interfere," he exclaimed. He bit his lip, and caught his breath convulsively. "Excuse me, Mrs. Aguilar," he added, "but I love Dorothea."

"And I love her," she answered, "and I trust her, too. Your heroics only amuse me. The surest way to awaken a fancy which is now quite dormant would be for you to show injustice to Antonio. Dorothea, like most women, has an ardent love of the oppressed, and hatred of the oppressor. Place yourself in one category and Antonio in the other."

"I see," said Burke. "I will be patient, and I will cultivate a love for the Indian race. I

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will pay the bonds. What more can I do? Wear a sombrero and a pink handkerchief? I will buy one to-morrow."

He rose with a formal bow, and retreated into the smoking compartment, where, with hat pulled low over his brows, he meditated long, an unlighted cigar between his teeth.

Mrs. Aguilar sighed as she watched him depart, but there was a light of pleased excitement in her eyes. Life is occasionally more interesting than a novel; and Mrs. Aguilar had no fictitious interests, since she had no time to read novels.

CHAPTER VII

Mr. and Mrs. Hereford had been for ten years married lovers. Theirs was the rare and ideal union in which time draws the bond closer. They had no children, which circumstance, in their case, wrought a tenderer mutual dependence.

Environment may have had its share in promoting their happiness. Love in a cottage, where poverty and care are constant guests, may be dust and ashes; but love in a cottage embowered in roses which bloom perennially in the land of sunshine; a cottage set in the midst of orange groves which yield an ample income; its gardens adorned with tropical plants; its lawns kept green by exhaustless irrigation; the vine and fig-tree a literal shade;—in such conditions joy takes no hurried flight.

Mr. Hereford's study was furnished with the luxurious simplicity in which the masculine mind delights. Burke was welcomed and made comfortable in an easy chair by an open window where the night air penetrated fragrantly, and he was given his choice of a long

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array of pipes and a stock of superlative tobacco. The circumstances made his confession easier.

"Don't think me a fool, Hereford," he was saying. "I have not quite lost my senses, and I am too old to act upon impulse. It may seem insane to you, but I have a reason."

"And a very good reason, a very pretty reason," rejoined his friend, archly; "a reason with a pair of beautiful eyes, and a smile that would make it easy for any man to perjure himself. I have always thought you invincible, Burke, and I can not tell you how glad I am to have you hit and hard hit at last."

"I don't know how you have guessed it," said Burke, behind a cloud of smoke.

"Oh, when Lachusa got the discouraging answer which was awaiting him at the telegraph office, Miss Fairfax was desperately disappointed," said Hereford. "Then her aunt confided to us your remarkable proposition, and gave us a hint of your reason, a hint sufficient for me, and perhaps for Miss Dolly, for she grew as red as a rose."

"Well," said Burke, "I have a check ready in your name for the amount. I suppose I may trust you for the sake of my reputation as a business man to keep the secret. Credit it to

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an Eastern sympathizer, to the Indian Association, anything you please. And now, if you can help me to ten words with Miss Fairfax I will bless you forever."

"You deserve as much as that," said Hereford. "A man of your age who will give up prejudice, conviction—everything—for love is a rare bird in these days. I like you the better for it, Burke."

He spoke as the man, the happy husband; but the habit of the lawyer reasserted itself as he took Burke's check and locked it in his desk. A comical expression of anxiety and regret showed itself in his face. He looked after the broad-shouldered form of his friend, who was impatiently preceding him, shook his head mournfully, and exclaimed under his breath, "Good Lord, what fools we mortals be!"

Dorothea had been walking in the garden with Mrs. Hereford. It was nine o'clock, and the full moon shone gloriously, flinging the shadow of broad palm leaves across the path. Suddenly Mrs. Hereford raised her head. "John is calling me," she said. "Excuse me; I will be back in a moment."

Dorothea was not unwilling to be alone. The beauty of the night—the mountains rising pearly-tinted on one side, the silver waves of

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the Pacific shining on the other, the calm of the sleeping garden sweet with the breath of orange blossoms—filled her soul with the joy that borders upon tears. She seated herself upon a bench and waited, smiling at her thoughts, until at the sound of approaching footsteps she exclaimed with enthusiasm: "I think you are a happy woman, Mrs. Hereford. Life must be easy in a home like this."

It was Burke who stood before her.

"Make such a home and share it with me, Dorothea," he exclaimed.

She looked about her quickly, as if seeking to escape.

"I love you, dear," said Burke, bending over her. "I have loved you, I believe, from the first moment. It seems that I have loved you all my life. I will be very patient, but tell me there is hope for me."

Her look of grave surprise, the denial in her gesture, cut him to the heart. He continued his wooing with eager persistency. The luminous seclusion of the night, the soft, passionate air, wooed for him, but her heart was steeled against him.

"I can hardly think that this is true—all that you say. You have known me so short a time. I do not mean to be unkind," she added, in

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reply to his ardent protestations. "You may deceive yourself. You will come to know, as I do, that there can be no real sympathy between us."

"In what can I not sympathize?" he exclaimed. "There is nothing of value to me compared to your happiness. I would gladly sacrifice my opinions and prejudices to fulfill a wish of yours. Do you doubt me, Dorothea? I will prove it this way: It is such a little thing compared to what I would like to do,—not more than if I should pick this rose and give it to you; but Hereford has my check for six thousand dollars for the appeal. I have just handed it to him."

A slight flush mounted to the girl's cheek, and she looked at him with sparkling eyes.

"I believe I would thank you more for the rose, Mr. Burke," she said. "I am not sure that a man has the right to sacrifice his convictions and the interests of his client just to please a foolish girl. I am afraid I am very ungrateful, for I am not pleased. If it had been your own wish, your real opinion, that would have pleased me."

"Oh, Dorothea, be less severe," he cried. "Love me a little, then you will not exact so much."

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"From your point of view I must seem unreasonable," she replied. "I thank you for what you have given up for my sake, and for what you offer me; but if there were no other reason, there would be one thing between us, Mr. Burke,—my father. It shows how short our acquaintance has been, that I have never spoken to you of my father."

Burke remembered what he had heard of Dorothea's father, but the thought filled him with added tenderness, foreshadowing the disappointment that must some day await her.

"Tell me about him," he said.

"I shall never marry while my father lives," she continued. "He is planning to follow me to California, and I have promised to make a home for him where he may be happy at last. He has had a hard life, a battle with the world, and with false friends and unkind tongues. I am the only one who really knows and appreciates him. Even Mrs. Aguilar is unjust to him. You know there are some natures, rash, impulsive, independent natures, that are always misunderstood."

Burke assented.

"I love him so well," she continued, "that it will be my greatest happiness to give up my life to him. As for you, Mr. Burke, I like you

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very much as a friend. Why need you think of anything else?"

Burke sighed. "You do not know your own heart, Dorothea," he said. "There is love there waiting to be awakened like the sleeping princess with a kiss. Your father will wish you to marry some day. I will wait for you as long as need be, and some day we will have a home like this and share it with him."

Dorothea hardly heard these words. Her thoughts were far away, and anxiety clouded her face as she said: "I am very much worried about papa. It is so long since I have heard from him, and last night I had a horrid dream. I thought I saw him stand beneath the gallows with a rope about his neck, and there was a great crowd looking on, and all were waiting for a pardon that might come; and it was you who were to bring it from the judge, but you would not, and I was on my knees before you, begging you to hurry, till at last they drew the rope up. Oh! it was so terrible!"

Burke sank upon his knees before her. "Dreams go by contraries," he said. "This is what it meant. I was to kneel to you, begging you for just one kiss, and you would not, oh, no, for you were cruel; and the pain in my heart grew worse and worse, until at last you

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took pity on me, and leaned forward ever so little, and put one hand on my shoulder, and gave me your dear lips for my very own, my darling, my wife."

His arm was about her waist, his breath was on her cheek, and his eyes drew her pleadingly, imperiously, to his will. Dorothea, dismayed yet passive, like a fascinated bird, looked at him in alarm; when the gravel crunched beneath a footstep, and the spell was broken.

Burke started to his feet, and turned to face Antonio Lachusa.

"I beg pardon," said Antonio, with his eyes on Dorothea. "Mrs. Aguilar told me that I should find you here. I have spent hours at the telegraph office, and a good deal of money too. The telegraph is expensive. But at last I have succeeded. The Indian Association has decided to go security, and the Associated Loan Company will advance the amount of the bonds. Our case will be appealed."

Dorothea sprang from her seat. "Oh, I am so glad, Antonio," she exclaimed, in a tone of hearty delight. "How clever you have been to do all that!"

Burke read in her expression the bitterness of a double rejection. She had forgotten him and his gift in her satisfaction at Antonio's mes-

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sage, and her eyes, if they spoke the truth, declared a personal interest in the messenger, a stalwart, handsome, manly figure, but—an Indian.

Antonio received her praises modestly, calmly ignoring Burke's wrathful and impatient pose.

"Marta will be glad," he said. "Fernando's grave will still be hers, and Pedro will die in the home that has been his for ninety years. I thought I would first bring the news of it to you, and then hire a horse and ride home to-night with the tidings."

"It is a long ride, and you will be quite worn out," she said.

"I am strong," replied Antonio. "Look here."

He grasped by one round the bench which stood before him, and raised it by a straight uplifted arm high above his head. "I could do that, too, with your weight upon it," he added.

"Pray don't try," she said, with a merry laugh, a spark of admiration in her eyes. "You are a Hercules."

"It is an argument against civilization," said Burke, "that the average physical strength in savage races is superior to our own."

Some offences bring swift retribution. At

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this speech the flame of indignation glowed in Dorothea's eyes. "Come into the house, Antonio," she said, "and tell Mrs. Hereford the good news. I suspect you have taken little time for your meals to-day, and you must have a good supper before you start. Mrs. Hereford will gladly contribute it to the cause, I am sure."

She preceded him through the garden and into the lighted dining-room, where Burke saw her engaged in smiling conversation with Lachusa, and actually waiting upon him with her own hands.

Antonio accepted all with due humility. If joy and triumph were in his heart his dark eyes did not show it. The dignity and decorum of his manners could not be surpassed by an East Indian prince of highest caste. He talked well, and he listened with that gratifying deference of attention which is a less common art. Mrs. Hereford was delighted with him as if he were a new discovery, a rare anthropological specimen. She assisted Dorothea to prepare his supper, lent him a horse, and speeded his departure through the moonlit night.

Burke had before this taken refuge with his friend. He was in cynical mood, and Hereford, with sympathetic tact, made no inquiries.

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"That check will not be needed after all, it seems," said Burke, when at last he rose to go.

Hereford opened the drawer and returned the paper, which Burke tore into fragments. Dorothea and her aunt had disappeared, and his host and hostess followed him to where his light carriage stood waiting.

"I suppose Miss Fairfax did not take your call to herself," said Mrs. Hereford. "She was tired and has said good-night."

"May Nora know your secret?" asked Hereford.

"I have asked Dorothea to be my wife," Burke explained to the lady, whose eyes now eagerly interrogated him, "but she will give me no hope."

"Oh, she will say yes in time," said Mrs. Hereford. "She must. I shall insist upon it; such a good fellow as you are!"

"If you wish to help me, keep her with you," he urged. "I shall not intrude too much upon her, but I feel that she will be safe under your influence. At Casa Blanca there are certain things which raise a barrier between us—her interest in the Indians, my lack of sympathy with her enthusiasms, heaven knows what."

"We will do our best to help you," was the reply. "I love her already myself."

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At this declaration Burke would have lingered to enter upon the subject dearest to the lover's heart, the perfections of the beloved; but Hereford bade him a laughing farewell, holding up his watch as a reminder of the hour, and his hostess called friendly good-nights and waved her hand till he was out of sight.

CHAPTER VIII

It was two o'clock when Antonio rode up Johnson's grade in the dazzling moonlight, which, reflected from the white granite walls of the cañon, was like the glare of a calcium light, throwing densely black shadows beneath every tree and buttressed cliff. The stillness of the night was intensified rather than broken by the occasional hoot of an owl, and the wailing bark of the coyote.

His horse's hoof-beats echoed sharply on the rocky way. Antonio spared him the steepest grades by walking with the bridle flung across his arm.

This was the theatre of the hold-up. Here, for the first time, Dorothea had spoken to him. He remembered her brave eyes and the pathetic pallor of her face. He recalled, too, the tumultuous emotion that had stirred his heart at the soft pressure of her unconscious head upon his shoulder. He had loved her at that moment; but how much more truly now that she had so often blessed him with her smiles and friendly words, each one of which was like

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a strand in a woven cable, that no shock of fate nor strain of time could break! His love was the breath of his life, the sustaining power of his being. He could not resist it nor reason against it, any more than he could resist the impulse that filled his lungs.

As he walked with uplifted head in the full consciousness of his manhood, he was ready to do and dare all that a man may. In the vast serenity of the wilderness the petty conventions of life shrank into nothingness. Circumstance and condition were things within a man's shaping. The daring of his hopes had overleaped the chasm of race lines. Baring his soul to the glorious light of heaven, he felt that he was worthy and might be blessed.

It was not Dorothea's kindness which had suddenly transformed his thought; rather, it was the jealous apprehension which he had recognized in Burke's glance. It was not scorn alone that he had read there, but a certain terror of his influence. One is not feared without a cause. Antonio began to sing an old half-forgotten Spanish love-song. At the top of the grade he remounted his horse, and rode down the slope and over the level plain like an arrow shot from a bow.

It is good to live; to be a man, conscious of

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youth and strength and the power of the human will. It is good to love, and to feel the deathless impulse which urges the union of soul with soul as dewdrop blends with dewdrop on the rose-leaf, obeying the compelling force that moves the worlds.

The day was broad and bright when he entered the rancheria at Casa Blanca. As he rode down the hill he was struck with the silence and desolation of the spot. No men were abroad in the fields. No smoke wreaths rose above the chimneys; and on nearer view the place was empty of its inhabitants. An old gaunt dog, ownerless, and befriended only by Antonio, crawled out from his bed by a smouldering hearth-fire and licked the newcomer's feet.

"Hallo, Odysseus," said Antonio, and the dog recognized the title his new master had bestowed upon him and responded by such grateful motions as his stiff form would allow. "Where are the rest? Are you the only one expecting me?"

It hurt him that the tribe should have so little confidence in the success of his mission. He had fancied that eager outposts would recognize him, and give the first report of his arrival. He had promised to return without

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delay if he should succeed in his expectation of raising the amount of the bonds. This, too, was the day of election, and Antonio had set his heart upon gaining that first stepping-stone in his new ambitions, the office of Captain of the tribe.

He fed and stabled his weary horse, then made his way to a deep well-like pool, exhaustless in the longest droughts, where he stripped and plunged in the icy waters, out of which he rose refreshed. Making his toilet with what care he might, he breakfasted on the sandwiches which Dorothea's hands had prepared, worshipping her goodness as he ate; then took his way to the village, looking for such stray bits of information as come unasked in a country neighborhood.

The first rusty-coated farmer whom he met fulfilled his expectations. "Hallo, Lachusa," he said. "We want you for the grape harvesting. I come down this morning to hire a lot of Indians, and find the hull lot of 'em off to Leona at a fiesta where that low-lived Marco has led them and set up a rebellion, I should call it. The bucks are dancing in their war-paint, and they've bought a keg of whiskey at Jennings's store. The women have gone too, and they'll make a week of it. Meantime, my grapes will

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be rotting on the vines. They're bursting with ripeness, and the bees are at 'em. One hand hardly counts, but you're a good worker. Will you come? I'll give you a dollar and a half a day."

"I should be glad to, but I have business on hand," replied Antonio.

"Want a taste of that whiskey, I suppose. Well, one don't count, no way. I'll go over Hilton way and hire."

He whipped up his nag and was soon out of sight. Antonio stood irresolute. He walked past the school-house, a spot beloved for its associations with Dorothea, and he mused awhile in the shadow of the fig-tree where he had first met Mrs. Leigh.

Retracing his steps, he paused in surprise, observing that the school-house door stood ajar. He looked within, wondering what interloper had intruded in the absence of the owners. Perhaps Marta had remained behind the others to sweep and clean in preparation for Mrs. Aguilar's return.

The two-roomed cottage which was attached to the school-building proper gave limited accommodation to the teacher's family. A low table in the living-room was spread with Dorothea's silver toilet articles, and it held the

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photographs which Antonio knew well by sight, the most conspicuous among them being that of an elderly man with a handsome sensual face, which bore traces of dissipation, yet preserved a certain inborn grace. This was Dorothea's father. She had enshrined him in a heavy silver frame. The flowers which Antonio gathered for her on the mountains she placed in a crystal vase before the picture, as if doing homage to her love. She talked constantly of her father. Antonio knew that she adored him, and he admired in her a trait common in the Indian race, with whom family affection is deep and ardent.

Antonio now saw to his surprise a stranger, dust-stained and weary, seated in Dorothea's chair; and with even greater surprise he recognized that he was the original of the silver-framed portrait. Mr. Fairfax had arrived in his daughter's absence, unexpected and unannounced.

Antonio pushed the door, and the stranger sprang to his feet, a look of expectation, almost of fear, in his eyes.

"Are you employed by Mrs. Aguilar?" he asked. "I came to see her and Miss Fairfax. Are they not at home?"

"They are making a short visit at Magnolia

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ranch, six miles from town, and fifty miles from here," replied Antonio, eager to be of service to Dorothea's father.

"I came in, since no one answered my knock, and the door was insecurely fastened," explained Fairfax. "The neighborhood seems deserted. I met no one on the way. I planned my coming as a surprise, but I might be regarded as an intruder. If you are here to guard the premises you may fancy I am planning to fill my pockets with these nicknacks. One degenerates into a tramp after a long drive over these dusty roads."

As he spoke he pointed to the silver ornaments upon the table, then paused and blushed, recognizing his own portrait among them, and observing that the Indian had also become cognizant of the likeness. He continued hurriedly: "If I can not see the ladies I will attend to a matter of business which I have on hand. Can you tell me where I can find a man called Samuel K. Jennings?"

Antonio's look darkened quickly. "Mr. Jennings is postmaster," he answered, "and keeps the store and saloon attached to it."

"Yes," said Fairfax, "that is the man. Is he in the store, I wonder?"

"You can easily find out," said Antonio.

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"It is half a mile over yonder, in the direction of the meeting-house. Any one will show you the way."

"I should prefer to meet Mr. Jennings elsewhere than at the store," said Fairfax. "Will you do me the favor of inquiring if he is there? Give him this card, if you please."

He took a card from his pocket, wrote a few words on it, and placed it in an envelope, which he sealed and handed to Antonio. "I will wait here till your return," he added.

Antonio reluctantly undertook the commission. He never willingly set foot in Jennings's store, nor interchanged a word with the man whom he loathed as worse than a venomous reptile; but he would have sacrificed much for Dorothea's father, and he went quickly on his errand.

It was unsuccessful. Mr. Jennings had gone to Hilton, and was not expected to return until evening.

Fairfax heard this discontentedly. He seemed ill at ease, and consumed by feverish impatience.

"You say the ladies will not return to-day?" he said. "Well, I will spend the day here. I do not care to tell you my name, but I may say that I have a right to Mrs. Aguilar's hos-

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pitality. You see, she has my photograph there. I am a friend."

Antonio nodded his comprehension.

"I shall sleep all day, no doubt," continued Fairfax. "I have travelled far, and have had little rest. Can I depend on you to find out the exact hour of Mr. Jennings's return, to deliver that envelope to him at the very moment of his setting foot in this place, and then to come back to me and show me the way to the Bonanza mine, where I have asked him to meet me? It is near here, I believe."

Antonio nodded again. "A mile to the east, over the hill," he answered.

"I wish to keep my presence here a secret, at least till I have seen Jennings," continued Fairfax. "Can I depend on you?"

"Most assuredly," replied Antonio. "I will watch for his coming and deliver the note. Then I will come back and be at your command."

"I will pay you well for your trouble," said Fairfax.

The light came into Antonio's eyes. "It is a pleasure to me to serve you," he said. "The service is freely given."

Left alone, Fairfax flung himself upon a couch and tried to sleep, but miserable thoughts

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intruded and kept him waking. So this was the home-coming that he had pictured in lively colors. He came unannounced, meaning to see Dorothea secretly and win her consent to an immediate departure for Europe, on the plea of a sudden business necessity. He would sell the gold mine and give up all his plans rather than live in a neighborhood made hateful by the presence of Samuel K. Jennings.

Guilty fear had tortured him when he had read that well-remembered name upon the page of Dolly's letter. It was as if fate pursued him with an ironical revenge. He had placed his dearest hostage all unwittingly in the very camp of the enemy. It was possible to remain at a distance and send for his daughter to join him. This would have been the part of prudence; but his affairs were in order, his ticket was bought, the surprise he had prepared for her was planned before her letter came; and a certain manly shrinking from the acknowledgment of defeat made him unwilling to confess even to himself the weakness of his position.

It was still possible to avoid the meeting with his enemy, or to carry it off with a high hand. Jennings's reputation was such as to discredit any statements that he could make; and as for actual evidence, what had he now that he could

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not have used any time in the last twenty years? Threats there had been in plenty. They were the spittings of that inward volcano of rage of whose existence Fairfax was well aware.

"I have given the creature cause to hate me," he confessed. "That is no reason why I should fear him. He is a coward himself at heart."

It was, however, with a desperate consciousness of an approaching crisis that Fairfax entrusted to Antonio the note which asked a meeting of the man whom he had spent the ingenuity of years in successfully avoiding. It was an act which he already regretted. Why had he not left Casa Blanca as secretly as he had come, joining his daughter and making his way to the harbor, where the ocean offered him a wide refuge? It was not yet too late to do this. A horse could be hired in the village to replace the weary animal that had brought him over the mountains. He could not recall his note, but Jennings might visit the gold mine on a fruitless quest. More than once he placed his hand upon the door-knob, meaning to make good his retreat, but something held him back.

It was, in fact, the latent instinct of the man of honor who can not turn his back upon a foe. Fairfax had long since lost the finer qualities of the soul. He had squandered his best endow-

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ments. Even his courage had yielded to the base alarms that are the consequence of guilt. But some premonition told him that he stood in the last ditch. He must conquer or yield to ignominy. He wished to face the worst from very impatience of the threat of it; and he hoped against hope that he should once more have the upper hand, once more prove himself more fertile in resource than the lesser mind that had opposed him.

It was both pain and pleasure to him to spend this time in a room which Dolly had lately inhabited, tracing the tokens of her dainty presence. How he loved her; how every wish and purpose in life was bound up in her; how he prayed day and night for the chance to live and die unsullied in her thought of him! He did not fear God's judgment; he shrank only from that judgment day when Dorothea should know him as he was.

At last he fell asleep, and dreamed of long-forgotten days and scenes known in childhood; and thought that he felt his mother's kiss upon his forehead.

CHAPTER IX

Antonio had much to do before he could think of rest. He must cross the mountains to Leona, he must confront Marco, win the election, and be back in time to keep his promise to Mr. Fairfax.

He was weary enough before he reached his destination; but this he would not acknowledge to himself. The chaparral that defended the slopes like chevaux-de-frise did not discourage him. He glided sinuously through the thickets; or, swinging himself over the cliffs, took the more open courses of the mountain streams, long since shrunken from their places, and leaving their boulder-strewn pathways bare.

The fiesta grounds at Leona were well chosen on a grassy plateau, and for the temporary accommodation of the revellers the men had built a village of brush houses, those idyllic sylvan huts, which an Indian with an ax and a forest at hand can construct at will almost as readily as the Arab pitches his tent.

The uprights are firm and strong. The walls and roofs are of green wattled boughs. The

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sunshine falls through the interstices with a subdued light, as if it came through stained-glass windows. A few boards make tables and chairs; blankets furnish a bed; and in such a hut, beneath such a sky, the world-worn pessimist might forget his cares and learn new joy in living.

Since it was not yet noon, and the night's potations had been heavy, most of the men were within doors sleeping off their excesses. The women, whose superior moral qualities enabled them to continue the orderly conduct of affairs, ignoring the dereliction of their spouses, were abroad washing garments in the brook, carrying water, and chopping firewood for the preparation of the noonday meal. Marta met Antonio with a cry of delight.

"Do you bring good news?" she asked.

"Good news," he answered. "The amount of the bonds has been raised, and we shall have a new hearing of our case."

Marta carried the tidings from hut to hut. Several of the younger men roused themselves and followed her to learn from Antonio the details of his success.

"I suppose you are counting on our promise to you," said Felipe, who buttoned up his coat to conceal the loss of his watch and chain,

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which flaunted openly on the red blouse of Manuel.

"Yes," said Antonio, "and I had counted on your promise not to gamble. You have been playing peon last night."

"And what if we did play peon?" retorted Felipe, with the pugnacity born of the after-effects of bad whiskey. "You are not the one who shall stop us. And Diego said that if you had been here you would not have wanted us to dance the catamount dance. You are a white man at heart, that is what is the matter with you. You are a white man, and you are in love with a white girl. I have heard from those that ought to know."

Fire flamed in Antonio's eyes. "What did you hear?" he asked, in a voice that awed Felipe in spite of himself. "Tell me," he commanded.

"It was Marco, who heard it at Jennings's saloon," said Felipe, in a surly tone. "Miss Bessie Wilson was talking to Jennings in the store. She was angry because Mr. Burke rode like mad after the stage you went in, and Jennings, who hates Burke, was questioning her as to what made him do it. He would not believe her when she said that he was in love with Miss Dolly Fairfax. 'Oh, no,' said Jennings, 'she

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has a red man for a lover, that precious sneak Lachusa, who is trying to fool the Indians by playing white man and red man both. She's no better than she should be, and he's good enough for her.' '

The world spun round before Antonio's vision. The blood sang in his ears. It was well for Samuel Jennings that he was thirty miles away.

Felipe shrank away affrighted. "It was not I who said it," he exclaimed. "You told me to tell you of it."

Antonio bit his lip till the blood came. "Yes, I told you to tell me," he repeated. "I did not guess that I must hear that reptile's lies. Well, Felipe, ask Diego to sound the call for the voting. I will make a speech before it begins."

"There are two other candidates," said Felipe. "Marco has put up a man, since he can not run himself—Diego's son, Carlos."

"A half-witted drunkard—no one will vote for him," remarked Antonio. "Who is the other?"

Felipe hesitated. "I never break a promise, and I will vote for you," he said. "I could not prevent it that the others put up my name."

Antonio laughed loudly. "Really, Felipe,"

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he said, "I could almost believe that you had lived among the white men and learned their notions of political honor."

Felipe went off with a lowering brow, and Diego, at his request, brought out the flat stave of seasoned wood attached to a twisted thong, which, by rapid whirling in a practiced hand, produces a dull, resonant vibration, unlike any other sound in nature or art—the most effectual summons to a gathering. Sleepy men tumbled forth into the sunshine. Marco, wide-awake and alert as ever, came smiling at the followers by whom he was surrounded. Carlos, his dummy, was in his usual state of silent inebriety, and sure to commit himself to nothing, either for or against his interests.

"He is a safe man," Marco declared. "He knows more drunk than half the others sober. He will never interfere with your right as free men to gamble if you choose. You may be sure of that."

This argument was well thought of, nothing being so dear to the heart as the favorite game of peon. But Felipe's adherents suggested that he also had no prejudices, and yet was a more decent man to represent the interests of the tribe. The conservatives were in favor of Felipe. The hot-heads would vote for Carlos.

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Antonio's chances seemed reduced to the number of those who had promised him their support beneath the oak-tree. He was sure of them, for an Indian never breaks his word.

Antonio realized the situation at a glance, but he did not allow himself to be disturbed by it. The people of the tribe, who had gathered together from a radius of fifty miles, were prepared to listen to him with the stolid attention which discloses nothing of its purpose till the time is ripe for action. Marco was the only one who betrayed his antagonism to the speaker by his gestures of dissent or impatience.

Antonio mounted upon an empty cart which stood disused in the centre of the level sward, and turned to face his audience, a stern excitement thrilling his nerves. It had been one of his youthful dreams (an ambition that haunted him no less for his realization of its futility) to stand one day on the floor of Congress, with a nation's future depending upon the impulse his choice might give the swinging balance, a hush of breathless suspense about him, the listening throng hanging eagerly upon his words.

The sunbeams quivered through the oak leaves and fell upon his head; the tall dry grasses rustled in the wind. The empty mesas stretched on either side and lost themselves

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among the desolate hills; but even here there was a theatre for human thought and action, a first step to be made in the path of his ambition.

What he spoke he could not recollect, for no stenographer recorded the words that sprang burning to his lips, words of wit and grace, of irony and persuasive eloquence, of pathos and of power. He pleaded the lessons of the past, the hopes of the future, the wide horizons that lie beyond the individual life, the duty to the tribe, to the race, to the ideal.

The old men listened in attitudes of non-committal deliberation. The young men stood tense, alert, resisting. Antonio felt a stricture at his throat. Was he alone among his tribe? isolated by his elevation above their thoughts and sympathies? He felt the strong ties of blood and kindred, and was ready to give his life for their advancement; but they held aloof in the suspicion which ignorance bears to knowledge. They doubted his enthusiasms, and questioned his motives.

He continued his address by descending from the general to the particular, explaining his projects for the future;—how the borax mine might be exploited, how a university might be founded to supplement the education of the

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government school. He was ready to be its teacher. His time and knowledge were at their service. All that he asked was confidence, co-operation, and the power to test the practicability of his schemes.

He told them simple stories of his daily life, touching recollections of his childhood. He referred to the folk-lore of the tribe, finding a meaning in their myths, a prophecy in their sacred hymns. Poetry, religion, family love were themes he touched upon as a harper tries his instrument, string by string.

He paused and looked about among his auditors. How far had he conquered their prejudices? To test the question he beckoned to one of the younger men who stood with an uplifted intelligent face in the front rank of the spectators.

"What have you decided, Samuel?" he asked, in a low voice. "Do you believe what I have told you? Do you mean to give me your vote?"

"You speak well, Antonio," was the reply. "But Marco speaks well, too. It is all words—words. Felipe is the man for me."

Marco in the background was already clamoring for a hearing. Antonio waved his hand and demanded silence.

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"Only a word and I have done," he said.
"You have heard me patiently, but you doubt
and hesitate. You are not ready to follow
me, for you think I lead you in uncertain
paths."

Silence gave assent.

"Then let me recommend a Captain who is
the man to suit you; not Marco's cat's-paw, not
a drunken reprobate, but a young, true, strong
man, who has grown up with you from child-
hood, one whom you know and trust. I refer
to my friend, Felipe Curo, and I herewith with-
draw my own in favor of his nomination, and
beg that it may be made unanimous."

He had touched at last a sympathetic chord. The suddenness of the surprise, the generosity of this appeal, won the quick appreciation of his hearers. The younger men cheered; the older men nodded approval. Marco mounted the rostrum and tried to speak; but was dragged and hustled from the field. Carlos followed him, offering consolation from the inevitable bottle. A circle was formed, the votes were cast, and without a dissenting voice Felipe was chosen Captain of the tribe.

Antonio entered the ramada which his cousin Manuel had built, and stretching himself in a corner pulled his hat over his eyes.

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"He has not slept for two days and nights," explained Marta, and she came and sat beside him, and insisted on his eating a portion of a savory stew, redolent of garlic, before she would leave him to repose. When she had gone Felipe entered, and crouching in sitting posture upon his heels near Antonio he asked in a low voice: "What did you do it for? Are you angry with me? Do you believe me to be a traitor?"

"No, you are a good fellow, and will make a good Captain. I did it to defeat Marco, unite the tribe, and snatch success out of the jaws of failure. For, after all, Felipe, the real success is not always the personal success, and no one can rise very high in this world who can not adapt himself to circumstances, and yield in view of future gain."

Felipe held out his hand. "I am your friend," he said. "You know more than any of us. You have a brain; so have I; but yours is trained and supple as a wrestler's muscles; mine is rusty and slow. If you will help me with your advice, Antonio, I will do my best to carry out your plans. And I came to tell you that if you will be Judge I will nominate you, and you can be elected."

"I had thought of that," answered Antonio, "but I would rather take no office now. I am

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young, and have plenty of time before me. Another year it may be different."

His smile was bright, his look determined. Felipe watched him with growing admiration. Education indeed was good. Felipe also suspected that there is such a thing as native endowment which education can supplement but can not supply.

Antonio slept in the midst of the noisy gaiety of the fiesta, in a hut where men and women, children and dogs had free ingress and egress, where the noonday meal was cooked and served, and plans were discussed for the evening's festivities. Marta had promised to wake him, and at the appointed hour she bent over him, reluctant to break his heavy slumber.

A neighbor's daughter followed her and stood with her at Antonio's side. "Is he not *muy bonito?*" she exclaimed. "He is the handsomest man in the tribe, and still unmarried. I wonder, Marta, if he will dance with me to-night."

Marta flung her a sidelong look of scorn. "You are not the only girl who is sighing for Antonio," she said, "but all may sigh in vain. He is as ambitious as a prince. Some day he will be Captain, if not to-day. He has a great future before him."

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"Who will he marry?" asked the girl.

"Why should he marry any one?" said Marta. "Some men are great enough not to care for women."

"But that is a pity," sighed her companion. "A man with such a mouth, and such eyes, with a straight nose like a white man, and strong as a lion——"

"Oh, begone!" cried Marta. "You would sicken him if he could hear you. Go make up to Carlos. He has no wife. I am going to wake my brother now, and he is not going to stay for the dance. He has business at home."

Antonio awoke at her call and sprang at once to his feet, finding that he had barely time for the return. As he hastened on his way he turned more than once to look back at Marta, and to wave his hand in response to her handkerchief, which fluttered till he was out of sight.

CHAPTER X

Antonio reached the store just as Jennings descended from his carriage at the door. At his approach the postmaster started and shrank away with the sudden flinching of the coward, ever ready with suspicion.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a loud, surly voice, which interested the loungers on the steps.

"Here is a note which I was asked to hand you," replied Antonio, presenting the missive.

Jennings took it with a swaggering air, tore it open and read the words written on the card. His face changed quickly from surprised apprehension to a vindictive delight.

"All right, I'll be there. Was that what you were to tell him? Where is he, by the way?"

Antonio gave no sign of comprehension. "I was to give you the note," he said.

"Well, curse you, you have done it. If he's hiding about here tell him I'm ready for him anywhere and at any time, but perhaps it is just as well our first interview should be without witnesses."

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He smiled, showing the pointed edges of his teeth. "I'll come to the place he appoints," he added, and, springing into the store, he went to his desk, from which he took a couple of folded papers and a pair of revolvers, depositing these in the inner and outer pockets of his coat. Antonio saw the action, and went at his swiftest stride to the school-house, where Fairfax was watching for him in a fever of impatience.

"Mr. Jennings is back, and will meet you immediately at the mine," said Antonio. "Perhaps you would better let me keep near you. Mr. Jennings is sheriff of the district. Perhaps that is the reason he always carries a loaded revolver."

Fairfax blenched and trembled. "Sheriff!" he exclaimed. "Set a thief to catch a thief!"

His trepidation was so evident that Antonio repeated his offer. Fairfax looked at him with quick suspicion.

"An Indian spy lurking within earshot! No, indeed! Perhaps you are in Jennings's pay."

Antonio made no reply. His face spoke for him.

"Show me the way as quickly as you can," commanded Fairfax. "There is a bill for you. Keep out of the way, then, till I have done with him."

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“I wish no money,” said Antonio. “I am in no man’s pay, but I will do anything I can to oblige you.”

“Well, make haste,” cried Fairfax. “I’d like to get there first.”

“I will take you by a short cut,” replied Antonio, and with the elder man pushing breathlessly after he descended the slope of the cañon and came upon the site of the gold mine; then, at Fairfax’s repeated command, he retreated to a distance, leaving him alone.

Fairfax approached the entrance of an abandoned stamping-mill, whose door hung on one hinge, while dust and rust invaded the motionless machinery within. He walked across to the power-house, and looked down the shaft, which was half-full of water, while the iron cage lay on its side half-detached from a broken cable. He picked up a piece of ore which was at his feet, and examined it with the eye of a connoisseur.

“It is not exactly like the samples which were sent me,” he said, smiling grimly.

As he turned he came face to face upon the postmaster, who swaggered up to him, his hat pushed down upon his head, and his hands deep in the pockets of his coat.

“Well, Teddy, we meet again,” he said.

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"Have you come to examine your new property? I hope you find it in good shape."

"Quite as good as I should have expected if I had known that you were concerned in the sale."

"Oh, I have laid low," said Jennings, with a loud guffaw. "I am a sleeping partner here. I have done pretty well since you last saw me. I have taken to a legitimate business, and married a rich man's daughter. But how goes it with you, Teddy? You paid up well for the mine. It was cash we were after. 'A valuable mine of high-grade ore, with an exhaustless ledge in the heart of the gold-bearing mountains of California.' How does it run?"

"Drop that," said Fairfax. "The mine is sold, and so am I."

Jennings laughed till the tears stood in his eyes.

"You can appreciate the beauty of it so well," he said. "You have so often done the thing yourself. The biter is bit with a vengeance. Well, to business. You knew I was here when you arrived. I meant that it should be a surprise, a pleasant surprise to you. But I am ready for you either way. What are your present intentions?"

"I am waiting to hear yours," replied Fairfax.

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"Then we may as well come at once to the point," said Jennings, pressing closer to him. Fairfax had his hand upon the butt of his revolver as it rested in his belt, but his companion had not appeared to notice it. Now he continued in a drawling voice, "I wish to remark, Teddy, that I've got the drop on you. I have a revolver in each side coat pocket. My finger is on the trigger, and the muzzle is pressing against your side. Stand perfectly still, please, and oblige me by throwing that pretty little weapon of yours down on the grass there, where it will be out of reach. Is that all you have about you?"

"Yes," said Fairfax, with a gasp of angry desperation. "I don't go doubly armed as cowards must."

"I have to, you know," said Jennings, confidentially. "It is in the way of business. I am sheriff here, Teddy. Perhaps you did not know what a great man I am, and thought me only a country store-keeper. My father-in-law got me the place. It is convenient in my dealings with the Indians. We have some lively times here, and I must confess when I tried for the place I was thinking a little of you. I don't forget old pals, even when they have betrayed me."

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"For God's sake, stop your talk and tell me what you want," said Fairfax. "You are holding me up for something, I suppose."

"We are coming to that," said Jennings. "Don't be in a hurry. If my hands were not occupied I could show you a document I have had ready ever since I had reason to expect you at Casa Blanca. It is on an old count, but it is not yet out of date. I have seen to that. It is a warrant for your arrest on the charge of murder."

Fairfax had trembled like a leaf, but he now recovered himself.

"That is absurd," he said. "I can not be held for that."

"There are other charges—forgery, conspiracy and the like—which I could have used as well," said Jennings, "but there is more red tape about their execution, and they can be brought up if this fails; but you can't get off, I tell you. The old book-keeper, you know, was found gagged and half-strangled, and he died of the injuries a week after the bank was robbed. I proved my innocence of that, but you fastened the robbery on me, and got off through your father's connivance, while I was put behind the bars. I owe you something for that; and I've waited till I could pay the debt."

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Now I think I can do it handsomely. For some time I was not at liberty to carry on detective work, and when I got out my effects were scattered. It took me several years to recover a letter you wrote me the day of the robbery. You knew the letter never reached me, and you thought my sister had destroyed it. She did a good many things for your sake, but she kept that for mine. You remember the contents of the letter. You asked me to go early to the bank and unbind the old man. You had had to hit him harder than you meant. He fought like a tiger. You feared the effect might be fatal. Oh, it is all there in black and white, proving that you struck the fatal blow, proving that your testimony against me was perjury, proving that I was the victim of conspiracy. There is mighty little that precious letter does not prove. I would not part with it for the price you paid for the Bonanza mine twice over."

Fairfax reeled like a drunken man.

"Now, all I ask is this," continued Jennings. "Walk quietly along beside me in just this position. March up to the store and place yourself in the carriage I have ready for you. My men will drive you to the station, and to-morrow you will be comfortably lodged in town

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at the expense of the state till we can bring your affairs to the attention of the authorities in New York. I won't make a scene if you won't. I won't even clap the handcuffs on you, as I have a right to."

Fairfax groaned like a baited bull. He suddenly remembered Dorothea, and desperation shook his soul. He cringed to his enemy.

"Let me off this time, Jennings," he said, with half a sob. "I'll pay you well. You've earned all you care to ask. You're a clever fellow, but you can't make much out of this thing, unless you've done it as a bluff, and want a ransom. I'll give you all I have."

"That's handsome, but won't go down," replied Jennings. "I want exactly what I've got—the chance for revenge. Do you think a man is a log of wood to spend years in a state prison on a false charge without being willing to sell his soul for revenge?"

"You know you were not an innocent man," said Fairfax. "You contrived the robbery and I executed it. I was your tool."

"And now you are my prisoner," said Jennings drily. "I'm getting tired of this. Please walk along in the direction of the store. It is necessary that I should keep my position, and

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keep the drop on you; but I don't want to be obliged to hurry your steps."

Fairfax obeyed, and the two men proceeded at a leisurely pace down the uneven rocky road, long disused and washed into deep gullies by the winter storms. Fairfax felt the tortures of the damned. It was not the fear of the extremest penalty of the law which daunted him, but fear of the look which he must meet in Dorothea's eyes, and the consciousness of the grief and desolation which must overwhelm her.

Jennings held his right hand with its weapon still in his pocket pressed close against Fairfax's side. He had drawn the other revolver from his pocket, and held it tightly in his grasp, but he kept a constant watch upon his prisoner, seeming to fear him even in his disarmed condition. Fairfax walked along as if oblivious to outward circumstance, but in reality he was keenly alive to the slightest detail of his position. Every sense was sharpened to a preternatural acuteness. He observed that, as the difficulties of the path increased, Jennings found it impossible to preserve his attitude, and relaxing the intensity of his precautions, he covered his prisoner with the weapon held in his left hand, while he attempted to disengage the other from his pocket. At the same time, a

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jagged boulder caught his foot and caused him to stumble forward.

It was the moment Fairfax had awaited. With the rapidity of a tiger that leaps upon its prey, he drew a slender Spanish stiletto from the sheath which hung unobserved at his side beneath his coat, and bending, struck his enemy in the neck at the very instant of his forward movement; and before Jennings could recover his momentary loss of balance he was overborne by the fury of the attack, and fell face downward on the dusty ground. The useless weapon dropped from his nerveless hand. Fairfax bent over him and stirred him with his foot, taunting him; but no groan escaped him, no muscle quivered.

"It is not possible," said Fairfax, half-aloud, "I can not have killed him in a second like that."

He stooped and lifted the inert form, rolling it over upon the sward by the roadside.

Jennings was dead, with wide-open eyes, and lips parted as if to speak. He had died so suddenly that his face was not distorted with a look of pain. In an instant, from a breathing man he had become a lifeless image of clay.

"It was fate or providence that guided my stroke," thought Fairfax.

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He was cool and stolid in the moment of his great escape. He fumbled in the pockets of the corpse until he found the warrant and the letter, at the sight of which he exclaimed in triumph: "Yes, it was the hand of God. He did not will that my innocent child should suffer."

He tore the papers into tiny fragments and scattered them on the ground; and not content with this, he tramped upon them and buried them with his heel, as if he feared that the wind might carry them abroad. His whole mind was concentrated on this task. He felt that he must throw himself heart and soul into trifling details of action, to avoid the lurking threat of fate. But he could not avoid it. It came with the sound of an approaching foot-step. Fairfax looked up and listened, and the cold sweat broke out upon his brow. At that instant the mark of Cain was set upon him, and he knew himself to be a murderer.

No purpose now of meeting Dorothea; no hope of exoneration; he was filled with a selfish fear, the overpowering dread of detection. He looked about him and saw no ready means of escape. The roughly-made road ended at the gold mine. The cañon was a cul-de-sac in the mountains. The slopes were steep and rocky.

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To scale the open rise of ground was to make himself a target for observation. He thought of taking refuge in a tunnel of the mine, but as he turned and stood hesitating the newcomer was upon him. It was the Indian who had done his errand.

Fairfax drew a breath of relief. An impulse more evil than that which had guided his dagger, slid into his mind. The Indian was alone and without witnesses. He was by the implication of an instinctive race-prejudice more open to suspicion than a white man. Who could prove that he was not the murderer?

Fairfax faced the horrified look in Antonio's eyes with an evil smile. He pointed to the pistols which were thrown upon the grass.

"This man attempted my life," he said. "In self-defense I struck him, and this is the result."

Antonio bent over the form of his dead enemy. The glassy eyes staring up at him seemed to accuse him of participation in the crime. Antonio had an inborn respect for the dead. He stooped and closed the eyes and straightened the limbs. Then he looked up at Fairfax with quick appreciation of his danger. "Will you give yourself up?" he inquired.

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"Shall I put my head in a lion's jaw?" was the answer. "Do you mean to betray me?"

There was cruel hostility in his look. He had become a man to be shunned and dreaded; but Antonio remembered only that he was Dorothea's father.

"You wish, then, to make your escape," he said. "The main road runs north and south at the foot of the cañon. To avoid that you must climb the hill to the west where you see that dry watercourse, and by following its lead you will reach the higher mountain. By still continuing westward you will strike the stage-road over beyond Leona."

He gave these directions in a monotonous voice, with head averted. It was as if he were making a compact with evil. The blood which had flowed in a tiny stream from the neck of the murdered man had made a bright red stain upon the flat granite rock where he had lain. Antonio watched it as if fascinated. Blood thus shed cries aloud for vengeance, and he was aiding the murderer to escape. Fairfax made no further delay. To his strained ears it seemed that there were distant voices and the noise of wheels. He fled as if already pursued, and Antonio was left alone in the presence of the dead.

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His head swam, and his limbs trembled. He sank upon a rock and bent his head upon his hands. He was weary and overworn, and this new thing had struck him like a blow upon a vital organ. His strength was gone.

The sky of a sudden had become overcast, and the wind, which blew in fitful gusts, had veered from the sea, and now came from the desert, with the breath of a furnace and the tension of imprisoned electricities. This desert wind, like the *Föhn* wind of the Swiss mountains, shrivels the herbage, sends the wild beast panting to his lair, and makes the heart of man weary as he lags at work.

Antonio thought of Dorothea with a keen pang of apprehension. The shadow of sin must fall upon her innocent head. A murderer's child, the daughter of a felon, she would be an outcast from that world which was her lawful place. She would know, as Antonio's people did, what it is to stand outside the gates of happy humanity, to see honors, dignity and the applause of men placed out of reach behind barriers as impalpable as air, yet as strong as steel. A hundred shafts of scorn would fall upon her heart, not hardened like Antonio's to suffer them in patience.

Upon this a flash of thought revealed to him,

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that, for the first time, the practical aspects of life were allied upon the side of his love and hope. He had believed that he might win Dorothea's heart, now it seemed possible that he might honor rather than dishonor her by offering her protection as his wife.

He was sure that Burke, the ambitious lawyer, proud of his family, hating the unconventional, would never love so blindly as to wed even the remote implication of disgrace. Dorothea, then, must stand alone, unless she would accept that adoring affection which should make the thorny places blossom with the rose of passion, and crown her like a queen with worship such as few men know or give.

Antonio sprang to his feet and stretched his arms into the air, a blissful smile upon his lips. Is not that life complete which can count one fair and radiant moment, even though it can not bid it stay?

Two men came hurrying up the cañon. Antonio recognized them as Jennings's clerks. They saw him, and they saw the body of the murdered man, and Antonio read his future in the look that leaped into their eyes.

The first impulse of a tremendous emotion with men of a certain class is towards blasphemy. Both men swore in a breath as they

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bent above the motionless form lying in its blood. Both by a common purpose threw themselves upon the unresisting Indian, overwhelming him with curses. There was still time for Antonio to declare the murderer and to point to his detection, for Fairfax's unpracticed feet were slipping on the loose boulders of the painful path that led him upwards. An agile pursuit would easily have overtaken him. The weapon, which remained wedged in the joint where it had dealt the fatal blow, would have sufficed for his conviction, since he wore the sheath which fitted it. Antonio's quick wit realized this and more; but an instinct of fidelity led him to keep silence. Let the consequences be what they might, he could not betray Dorothea's father.

The men, surprised at his immobility, found their task an easier one than they had hoped. The young Samson of his tribe could readily have broken their improvised bonds. Resistance at the first moment would have been effectual; but in the next each man had possessed himself of a revolver, and, strong in bravado, presented it on either side of the prisoner's head, urging him brutally forward.

It was only a mile to the village, and in this distance ill news, which flies fast, had drawn

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from the apparent emptiness of a country neighborhood an ever-increasing and clamorous mob. They followed at Antonio's heels like snapping curs. He knew to the full the bitterness of public execration. It was forgotten that the dead man had few friends and many enemies. His vices were forgiven him in view of the fact that he had been murdered by an Indian.

Of a sudden he had become a hero, a representative man, a focus for that sentiment which is the mockery of patriotism yet sometimes confounded with it, race hatred, latent in some breasts, yet existing in all and answerable for some of the cruellest tragedies of history.

It was suggested that the prisoner be strung without trial to the nearest oak tree; but lynch law is less popular when the regular courts give satisfaction, and when had an Indian ever been acquitted in a court?

Popular opinion was satisfied when handcuffs were produced and placed upon him, and he was thrown into a jolting cart for quick conveyance to Hilton. Haste was the more necessary, since the hot and fitful breezes promised an electric storm, and the sun was already sinking in a lurid sky behind the mountains.

CHAPTER XI

Fairfax had climbed beyond sight of the cañon and that which was transpiring there; and as he hurried on his way he had forgotten the probability of which he had been clearly conscious,—that the Indian might be suspected of his crime. His brain was confused with many contradictory thoughts. Fear clutched at his throat and put reason to flight.

The oppressive heat made progress difficult. He stumbled on the rocky way, yet pushed unceasingly forward as if there were danger in a moment's delay. The course of the mountain stream became ever more difficult and choked with gigantic boulders where in winter the rushing water tumbled in cascades from rock to rock. Sometimes there were passageways between them, sometimes he must clamber over and around them. To take to the tangled thickets at the sides offered only a change of difficulties. A lynx crept soft-footed across a grassy level, and disappeared with a bound at the noise of his approach. A buzzard sat upon a tree above his head, blinking its reddened eyes

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and craning its hideous naked neck as if in search of prey.

He came at last upon a stretch of open mesa where the wide horizon seemed set with spying eyes, and he longed for the shelter of the thicket. It was growing dusk, however, and darkness would soon cover his flight. From the height where he now stood he caught a glimpse, through an opening in the mountains, of the distant ocean with a rocky islet rising from it like a drifting sail.

The sun was sinking in a crimson sky, as if in a sea of blood. In the east, where the mountains rose steeply, a thunderstorm was massing great heaps of lurid clouds.

His path now led upward upon the face of a granite cliff, where the erosion of storm and weather had worn a natural causeway. At the top of the cliff, and on the brow of the mountain, he was safe to pause and take his rest, and look about him like an eagle perched upon an inaccessible eyrie.

Here he was free from pursuit, or if it came he could baffle detection by taking refuge in the countless hiding-places formed by rocky caves, deep chasms and winding cañons, which gave variety to the mountain side that from a distance had the appearance of an even slope.

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Only a goat could climb over some of the narrow ledges which bridged these perilous depths, and he realized that in the darkness his progress must be full of danger, unless he could determine on a route less difficult than the one he was pursuing. He was anxious to make his way with little delay to the stage-road indicated by Antonio as his safest point of communication with the world; but he began to realize that what might seem a feasible journey to the Indian was attended for him with all the perils of hopeless wandering in a labyrinth of savage hills, where a false step might threaten his life, and thirst and hunger wear fatally upon his strength.

At whatever danger of detection, he must descend to the level of the valleys, where a ranch house would afford him food and shelter. When he saw to what a height he had climbed and how the night was closing in upon him, he began to suspect the Indian of purposely misdirecting him. The loneliness of the vast solitude appalled him, and he started in physical terror as a tremendous noise, like the burst of a volley of artillery, shook the very ground at his feet.

The thunder clouds had rolled upward to the zenith, and flash after flash of zigzag lightning

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more vivid than any he had known before dazzled and blinded him, while his ears were filled with the continuous roar of a mighty whirlwind, driving in its course not torrents of rain but columns of sand and gravel that beat like hail upon every unprotected surface.

The lightning was continuous, the thunder echoed from rock to rock, with repeated reverberations that could not die upon the ear, so rapidly was each succeeded by the next; but what daunted Fairfax was the unfamiliar thing, the fierce beating of that rain of sand upon him.

It drove into his eyes and choked his mouth; he rolled upon his face, and submitted to its pelting; then, realizing that no strength could hold out long against the ever-increasing fury of the hurricane, the sucking of his life-breath from his lungs in that deadly atmosphere, he crawled like a wounded creature in search of shelter, but found none. Voices shouted to him through the hurly-burly. Dorothea was calling his name. Jennings stood outlined in fire against the sky and waved his hand and jeered at him. Fairfax staggered to his feet. On the opposite slope he would be in the lee of the mountain ridge. He must reach that refuge or die. He reeled helplessly against the

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pressure of the mighty force which upbore him and carried him along. One foot was on the ground, the other trod on nothingness; and still the wind carried him like a leaf.

There was a flaw in the tempest, a sudden veering of the gale, and Fairfax fell, striking against jagged, bruising rock-walls, fell within a deep abyss, a long narrow gully made by some rending earthquake in primeval times, serving now as a shelter from the storm—a quiet grave for the dead.

Dorothea sat upon the eastern portico of the vine-covered cottage at Magnolia ranch. The night air was so still and breathless that a pin-fall could have been heard. Her pulses beat quickly from some inner excitement caused by the electric tension in the air. The stars shone overhead through rents in fleecy vapor; and the ocean was silvered by a late lingering glow in a pallid sky; but over the mountains, fifty miles distant, great piles of clouds of an inky blackness rose and mounted ever higher towards the zenith, obscuring the stars. Mr. and Mrs. Hereford had been called to town on a matter of business. Mrs. Aguilar had taken to her bed directly after supper with the nervous headache which was the consequence with her of a desert

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wind. She was the less unwilling to leave Dorothea alone as she was assured that Burke was to call that evening, and she momentarily expected to hear the sound of his horse's feet. All her animosity had vanished, and was replaced by a fervent wish that he might prosper in his wooing. She could foresee no happier future for her niece than that which he offered her.

Dorothea blushed and started at the sound of his footstep on the porch. It seemed unmaidenly that she should thus wait for him alone. She feared that he might think it pre-arranged, and she was shy and distant in her greeting. Burke did not notice this. He was weary and absent-minded, and he sank into a chair with hardly a glance at her face.

"They are having a tremendous storm at Casa Blanca," he said, "an electric storm which affects the telegraph wires. They tried to telephone me just now from Hilton; but I could not make out what they said. I am almost sure I did not understand it rightly. At any rate, I am quite willing to wait until to-morrow for the message."

"Did it concern any of our friends?" asked Dorothea.

Burke looked at her quickly. "Yes, and

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no," he said. "But, as I say, I could not hear the words connectedly."

The darkness grew inky of a sudden. The clouds had swept the stars out of sight. A sudden flash of zigzag lightning rent the heavens, but in silence, for there was no thunder peal.

"The storm is too distant for us to hear the thunder," said Burke. "It is fifty miles away, yet the lightning is instantaneous. Look how it flashes and quivers! Do you not enjoy watching it?"

"I do not know," replied Dorothea, uneasily. "The storm makes me very nervous. I believe it is the silence of it. It is so unnatural. Not a leaf stirs on the loquat tree there. It is as if the night were holding its breath."

Burke sighed. "I believe it has that effect on me," he said. "We are only children of nature, after all, and she frightens us with her ill tempers. How helpless we are to control events! Life sometimes becomes a storm or a cyclone, and rends our plans and wishes and makes nothing of our human wills."

Dorothea caught her breath with a laugh. "How blue you are!" she said. "As for myself I feel as if I wanted to cry. I feel like a child in the dark, who wants some one's hand to hold."

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"Hold mine, dear," said Burke, offering it.

"How can you?" she exclaimed, with an angry blush. "I thought you knew that we were to be only friends."

"You are too hard on me," said Burke. "I am sure I do the best I can, but it is a hard task you have set me; to be with you and not to tell you how I love you; or to live in lonely misery without the chance to see you. Has not every man the right, Dorothea, to speak for himself, to woo the woman he loves? A girl of your age hardly knows her own heart. She sometimes says no and spends a lifetime in regretting it."

"Oh, how vain you are to imagine that that could be!" retorted Dorothea. "She may find some one she loves much better, some one who is the very ideal of her soul, and without whom all her life would have been lonely if she said yes to the first man."

Burke moved closer to Dorothea, and bent to look into her eyes by the shifting light of the thunderbolts.

"Is there such another, Dorothea?" he asked.

She panted in alarm. "I did not mean it of myself," she answered.

"I think you did," said Burke, growing pale and speaking slowly. "No woman ever yet

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dealt in generalities. All her philosophy is taken out of her own heart. You owe it to me to answer me. Do you love, could you love, Antonio Lachusa?"

Dorothea gave a little cry of defiance. "You ask me two questions in one," she said, "and you have no right, no shadow of a right, to ask either; but I will tell you that I could love such a man. I will not say I do."

Burke's face changed quickly.

"I can never let him know it," she continued, with burning cheeks. "I shall never give him the slightest sign of it; and yet, in spite of myself, I can not feel when he is near me that he is an outcast simply because he is of another race. I can not shut my eyes to the beauty of his nature, the finest, most unselfish nature I have ever known. I can not fail to read all that his eyes tell me, and to realize that he gives me a love for which I might thank God on my knees if it were given by another man, and yet no other man could be capable of it. I shall carefully obey the conventions which men have made, do not be uneasy about that. I should do this for my father's sake, for every reason except the innermost voice of my being, and that I must not listen to. But in my heart I despise and defy these narrow rules. A great

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soul like Antonio's might make its own conventions."

Burke's immovable attitude vexed her almost to tears.

"You said I owed it to you to tell you the truth," she said. "Now I have done so, tell me you hate me if you choose. Anything is better than silent contempt."

"I can not hate you, though you wound me cruelly," he replied. "I can not even think of my own pain, in view of the misery you may suffer. Be patient with me when I tell you that your fancy will not last. It is founded upon pity, and the very pathos of it, its unusual conditions, are necessary to its existence. It is a hot-house plant. It will not bear the rude breath of reality. And when it shall perish, as it certainly will, you may turn to me as one who has always been your friend. Remember that whatever happens I have this claim upon you. I shall never relinquish my right to repeat my offer until you belong to another."

Dorothea's eyes were wet. "You are better to me than I deserve," she said. "I feel that I may trust you, and I am grateful for that."

"God knows you may trust my love," he answered. "Life is hard. Its storms rend our illusions. If there are storms ahead for you,

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remember that my arms are always ready for your refuge. ‘My plaidie to the angry airt, I’d shelter thee.’ ”

He rose to take leave, and held out his hand.

“You are going,” she said, “and oh! I am so afraid of the storm. Stay only a little longer. It is not late. I feel as if I should choke with fright sitting here and watching the lightning alone, and yet I could not sleep. Auntie has a headache, and must not be spoken to. The servants are not about. I am in actual terror all of a sudden, as if some fearful thing had happened, or was about to happen.”

Burke resumed his seat. “Take my hand, dear,” he said again. “Then you will not be frightened.”

Her cold fingers stole shyly within his; and soon the friendly grasp of the strong hand quieted her fears.

Mr. and Mrs. Hereford, returning, found the two seated together in quiet confidence, which they interpreted as meaning all that they hoped for both. The cheer of their lively presence restored Dorothea to herself. Burke rode back to town through the night, feeling some stray gusty eddies of the storm which was dying into silence and darkness over the mountains.



CHAPTER XII

Burke started at early dawn for Hilton. The telephone message had been repeated to him, and he found that he had heard aright. That which he had refused to credit, and which he dreaded as a complication of evils for his friends, particularly for Dorothea, was sad and sober fact. Samuel K. Jennings had been found murdered in an unfrequented spot. Antonio Lachusa was accused of the crime.

Mr. Hereford read the morning paper at the breakfast table, and handed it in silence to his wife, who in turn contrived that Mrs. Aguilar should see it before her niece. The latter, however, had not the self-control of the lawyer and his wife. She exclaimed in indignant horror: "As well accuse me," she said. "Oh, it is shameful, horrible!" and she burst into tears.

It was her niece who comforted her. The sudden blow of fate was only a challenge to Dorothea's courage. No doubt by the time they reached Hilton Antonio would be free, and the real murderer discovered. They must go at once. All her hopes were centred upon Burke's

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skill as a lawyer and fidelity as a friend. She must see him immediately and engage him in Antonio's defence.

The prisoner had been kept closely guarded in the station-house at Hilton, and he had slept manacled as he was, while his guards watched and the hurricane raged without.

"An Indian has no more feeling than a dog," said one of the men. "He can murder a man in cold blood, and then lie down and sleep like that."

The possibility of the innocence of the accused occurred to no one, though legally he was entitled to the benefit of the doubt. The evidence, it was understood, would suffice to hang him twice over; and the case had been tried and sentence passed in the popular opinion, before the phlegmatic little justice who was to conduct the preliminary hearing had finished his dinner. This important event concluded, he was as indisposed as any one for delay.

The court was opened and the crowd of spectators who clamored for admission were denied entrance only because of the limited space, and the fact that the justice, being scant of breath, must consider his comfort. The room was well filled with the witnesses and the court officials. The prisoner was brought into court, and the

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weapon with which the crime had been committed, a long slender dagger of Ferrara steel, with a chased silver handle, was laid on the desk of the prosecuting attorney, Judson Bradford, a young man with an enviable record of swift success in criminal cases.

Burke, who was present as spectator, looked at this weapon with curious interest.

Antonio, as he entered, cast a hasty glance about the room, as if searching for a friend. He saw only Burke, who sat with downcast eyes, playing absent-mindedly with a paper-cutter. The young lawyer was determined not to betray the interest he took in the case, and he listened with an air of unconcern which struck Antonio as the refinement of cynicism.

The clerk read the charge of murder in the first degree, and Antonio, being put to the plea, replied in a clear voice, "Not guilty."

The coroner, whose presence in the neighborhood had made it possible to grant the popular demand for an immediate hearing of the case, was the first witness. He described the appearance of the body, which had been removed from the place where it had fallen upon an exigency arising from the tremendous sand-storm which had burst over Casa Blanca that night, and which made it inexpedient to leave the dead

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exposed. The body, however, had been as little as possible disturbed. The stiletto was still in the place where it had given the fatal blow, wedged tightly into the joint between the vertebra and the skull, a vulnerable spot difficult of attainment by any but a practiced hand. Chance, of course, might have favored the direction of the blow. Death had been instantaneous.

John Evans and Henry Brown, employed as clerks in the store and post-office, followed as witnesses. They described the finding of the body of their late employer in the cañon near the gold mine, where the prisoner stood close by as if gloating over his deed.

They told how Jennings had been decoyed to the spot half an hour before by the prisoner, who had called more than once at the store to inquire for him, and had been present at the very moment of Jennings's return from Hilton. He had given the postmaster a sealed note, which had evidently contained a forged letter appointing a meeting with some friend unexpected at the time, for Jennings had shown surprise and apprehension, and, as if suspecting foul play, had armed himself with two loaded revolvers; and had said to his clerks when he started, "Boys, if I am not back in half an hour

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come after me. I may have business on hand that will need your help. I am going down to the gold mine to meet a friend."

A dozen men had seen Antonio hanging about the store, and had witnessed his giving the sealed envelope to Jennings. Some of them averred that it contained a card with pencilled words upon it.

Others deposed that Antonio had more than once shown hatred of the postmaster. Nothing would induce him to make purchases at the store. He rode or walked the ten miles to Hilton, in preference. The cause of this hatred was well known. It was not necessary to refer to the fact that the dead man was universally regarded as the father of Marta Lachusa's child.

The prisoner was asked if he wished to testify in his own behalf. Antonio looked around among the unsympathetic spectators, eager only for his conviction; he looked at Burke's averted face, and slightly shook his head.

"I have said all that I care to say," he answered. "I am not guilty of the murder of this man."

To some further questioning he refused response, and Bradford confronted the judge with an impatient frown, as if to protest against delay. The hearing was forthwith concluded,

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the court holding the prisoner for the December term of the superior court without bail.

Antonio, handcuffed and surrounded by a hooting mob, was led to the stage that was waiting for passengers bound for the town. He was hustled into a seat between two guards.

Just as the stage was about to start a loaded farm-wagon drove into the village, and a number of Indians still in festal costume descended and looked about them in bewilderment.

Antonio recognized his sister, and leaning forward called her name. Marta rushed to the side of the stage, waving her hands with distracted gestures. She tried to reach her brother; she tried to clamber upon the step; but the coach starting at the moment, she was forced back, and would have fallen beneath the wheels if a bystander had not caught her by the arm and dragged her out of danger.

Antonio called a comforting message as he passed, but his guard, interrupting, struck him roughly on the mouth.

"Hold your gab, murderer," he said, with an oath.

Burke was seated in his office at Hilton. His desk was piled with accumulated correspondence, but he had not begun his work. He was

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sunk in moody revery, and he started as if from a dream when, after a quick tap at the door, Dorothea stood before him. He sprang to his feet, and looked at her with keen solicitude. Her eyes were bright with tears, her lips were quivering, and she struggled with the sobs that choked her voice, as she began hurriedly: "I have come at once to you, Mr. Burke. You will help us, I am sure. I have come to beg you to defend Antonio."

Burke stood rigid with surprise. The light died slowly from his eyes, and his lips became compressed into a stern rigidity.

Dorothea, watching him closely, made a little eager gesture of impatience.

"Do not refuse. Wait a moment. I have come to tell you something else. I will give you all, all you ask, if you will save his life."

"You mean——" began Burke.

"I mean that I will marry you, if you still wish it, anything, anything to save him."

Burke clenched his hands until the nails made little rosy marks in the flesh of the palms. So a man might brace himself to immobility as he heard his death sentence.

"It was your love I asked you to give me, Dorothea," he said, in a tone whose emphasis was eloquent enough.

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"Oh, I will love you if you save him," she cried wildly. "He must not die that fearful death."

She moved closer to him and laid her hand upon his arm. He trembled at the touch. "For my sake," she pleaded.

"Good God, Dorothea!" he exclaimed. "Can you so forget yourself for this man, an Indian, a murderer?"

She started in horror. "Is it possible that you believe him guilty?" she cried.

"Yes, I believe him guilty," he answered.

"Oh, how can you?" she exclaimed. "Oh, what shall I do?"

Burke's heart was wrung with pity for her grief.

"I have not yet refused your request," he said. "For your sake I will defend him. I believe that the Indian had great provocation; but he planned the murder coolly and deliberately. I do not think that it is possible to save his life; but I will yield to your wishes, and do my best with the case."

His tone was cold and indifferent, but she did not notice this in the joy his words gave her. She held out her hand to him, smiling through her tears.

"You will succeed," she said. "You always do. How can I ever thank you?"

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Burke took her hand and stood looking down upon her with mournful eyes. She seemed so weak and defenceless in the storm that had broken upon her that he was roused from his own bitter grief to a sudden recognition of her position. Let the world but once suspect the enthusiasm of her interest in the Indian, and its judgment would not spare her. To a woman the world's condemnation is social death. In a lightning flash he saw her future revealed, and his own duty as clearly defined. He put his arm about her, and drawing her towards him he kissed her passive lips.

"This is my retaining fee," he said. "I will accept all that you will grant me. I believe Lachusa guilty, and there is only one thing that can give me courage to throw myself heart and soul into the case. You have guessed what that is. I hesitated, for I feared to take advantage of a momentary feeling, something you might regret. If you are really sure of yourself, Dorothea, I will do my best to save Lachusa's life, on condition that you allow me to announce our engagement to-day."

"As you please," she answered. "What does it matter—now?"

It was impossible for Dorothea, in the youthful self-absorption of her grief, to understand

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the complexity of emotion which swelled Burke's heart. He was realizing in bitterness of soul the irony of fate, and for that sorrow there is no consolation.

Mrs. Aguilar's entrance at this moment filled the room with the clamors of woe.

"What can be done, Harry, oh, what can be done?" she cried. "Every one is against him. They say there is not a break in the testimony, not a loophole for escape."

"We shall see," answered Burke. "I must have time to work it up. I am engaged to conduct the case, and I do it to please Dorothea, who has promised to be my wife. Please tell the news to our friends."

Mrs. Aguilar embraced her niece with congratulations, mingled with tears. This was no time for joy, but the bright and the dark are strangely mingled in life.

"If I could see Antonio," said Dorothea, "I think I could make him speak in his own defence. They say he will not open his mouth. I feel sure that he is concealing the truth from some good and generous motive. It would be like him to suffer for the sake of saving another. I wonder if it could be possible that Marta——"

"Dolly, how can you?" exclaimed Mrs.

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Aguilar. "Marta has been patient for so long. How could she do a deed like that?"

"Oh, I do not know what to think," said Dorothea.

"It is hardly possible that you should see Lachusa," said Burke, "but I will go at once to town, and make the preparations for the defence. I will see him, and see what I can get out of him, and I will tell you how I prosper."

"I will go back to Casa Blanca, and I will find some clue," said Dorothea, earnestly. "There must be a clue that will lead in an opposite direction if we follow it before it is too late. I will give my whole heart to finding it. You shall see what a detective I will make, Mr. Burke. Together we will work up a strong case for our client."

Her eyes shone for the first time with the light of hope.

Burke detained her to whisper in her ear: "When we are with others remember that we are betrothed. When we are alone, I will exact nothing."

"How good you are!" she answered. "Oh, how I feel it! I will try so hard to do my duty to you."

When the door was shut behind her Burke seated himself again at his desk, laid his head

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upon his arms, and exclaimed with half a sob: "God help me to be content with that. I am too old to cherish illusions. I ought to know that fortune never gives us more than half our wish. The hopes and dreams of youth mock a man of my age. Courage, patience and duty, that is all there is to life, after all."

CHAPTER XIII

A week later Burke met Judson Bradford on the street in town.

"Oh, I say, Burke," exclaimed the prosecuting attorney, "I should like to have two words with you, if you have the time. About that criminal prosecution: You have not the ghost of a case, you know. Now, I have more evidence than I need. It may be expedient to dispense with some of it. But first tell me if what I hear is true. Are you engaged to Miss Dorothea Fairfax?"

"It is true," Burke replied, paling a little in expectation of he knew not what.

"Oh, that is all right. I congratulate you. That is all I wanted to know."

"Tell me what you mean," said Burke, determinedly.

"Only that I will not call a certain witness. I can get on very well without him. My case is already made up from beginning to end."

"I must insist that you explain," persisted Burke.

"No use, waste of time, hurt your feelings;

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but if you insist:—I've been making inquiries among the Indians; have every moment of prisoner's time accounted for on the day of the murder. He went over to the fiesta at Leona and tried to win the election as Captain. Madly ambitious, always in hot water, he quarrelled with Felipe, a friend of his, on account of an injurious slander he had referred to. Jennings had made a derogatory allusion to Miss Dorothea Fairfax, it seems. He had declared in his saloon that she encouraged an Indian lover, 'the sneak Lachusa,' as he said."

Burke took a step forward, anger flaming in his eyes.

"Just so Lachusa sprang upon Felipe with fury in his look; then recollecting, as you must, that he had forced his friend to repeat it, he went straight back to Casa Blanca, where he murdered Samuel Jennings, the slanderer. This story was told to me by that smooth-tongued Marco, who overheard Jennings make the remark, and also overheard Lachusa's conversation with Felipe on the subject. But I will take pains not to call Marco as a witness for your sake, Burke."

It was impossible for Burke to forget this conversation. He pondered it painfully during the day, and lay awake at night recalling it.

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He was now absolutely convinced of Lachusa's guilt. He was also conscious that in his inmost heart he justified and applauded the deed.

The next day's mail brought him a letter from Dorothea.

"Dear Mr. Burke," she wrote. "I have a clue, a very important one. A stranger was at Casa Blanca on the day of the murder. He came and went in a mysterious manner, evidently desiring to avoid recognition. Mr. Beverly's hired man saw him driving alone in a light wagon on the road near Casa Blanca, and gave him some information about the distance to that place. The stranger was dressed in a rough outing suit, and wore a soft hat pulled down well over his face. He was a middle-aged man, and looked like a foreigner. When he reached Casa Blanca he left his wagon, tying the horse under the shed near the blacksmith's shop. The shop was shut up, the blacksmith being away. The horse was left untended there all day. When the storm came on the horse became terrified by the lightning, broke his bridle, and ran furiously down the road, demolishing the carriage and freeing himself from the harness, and finally took refuge in an open barn half-way to Hilton. An account of the runaway was in the daily paper. It was discovered

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that the horse belonged to the Crescent livery stable in town. One of the employees of the stable came after it, and took it back. If you question him you will be able to obtain a description of the stranger, who has not been seen or heard of since. I am convinced that this was the man who sent the note to Jennings by Antonio. I am convinced that the stranger was the murderer. Why Antonio wishes to shield him by his silence I can not imagine. Perhaps he gave his promise to say nothing. Antonio would not deliberately aid a criminal, but an Indian attaches great importance to a promise. He will keep faith at any cost."

Burke smiled at the gap between Dorothea's premise and conclusion; but he considered the matter worth looking into, and went at once to the Crescent livery stable.

Yes, the man who brought back the horse hired it to the stranger, who paid for its use in advance, promising to return next day. He was going on a business trip in the mountains, he said. He was a middle-aged man, and looked like a gentleman, though he was dressed in a roughish sort of foreign suit. He wore a belt about his waist, with a broad silver buckle. No, it was not a cartridge belt.

Burke began to take more interest in Doro-

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thea's clue, and he went at once to the jail to call upon Antonio. As the key turned in the heavy lock, Antonio looked up from his seat on the bench, which served for bed and chair alike, and greeted his lawyer with a smile. Any change was a welcome relief from the dreadful monotony of his days, and Burke was the only link between his present and the outer world. There was no ray of direct sunlight in the place. The only window, a high loophole, gave on a narrow court; and a feeble glimmer came through the grated door from the corridor, on which similar cells fronted. This was murderers' row.

To Burke the situation seemed for the first time intolerably sad. It was as if a strong young eagle nursed on sunny heights were shut up in a dark cage to die. He took a seat beside the prisoner, and he addressed him with a new ring of sympathy in his voice which Antonio was quick to detect:

"I hope you are going to speak to-day, Lachusa. Your friends are working for you. I am going to do my best, but I am hampered from the start by your unwillingness to give me your version of the story. Surely you can have confidence in your lawyer. If you tell me you did the deed, I shall still defend you. Will

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you not tell me who murdered Samuel Jennings?"

Antonio quickly reviewed the situation. He saw that there was no rescue for him unless Fairfax should confess the crime and give himself up to justice; for since suspicion had not attached to him his escape was assured. By this time he was already at the coast, and the world was open to his flight. Accusation of him would contain no proof. If there were no hope why should he struggle against his fate? Silence would best serve Dorothea.

Burke watched him in perplexity, then he drew a letter from his pocket.

"I may as well tell you that we have a clue," he continued, since his question remained unanswered. "Miss Fairfax is greatly interested in your case. She has been working indefatigably in your behalf, for she is firmly persuaded of your innocence."

Antonio's eyes shone with delight.

Burke felt that the position of each must be clearly defined, and he added deliberately, "Miss Fairfax has promised to become my wife."

Antonio's look did not falter, though a subtle change came over his face.

"This letter is from her concerning you,"

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Burke went on, in an incisive voice, as if utterance were an effort. "I will read it to you."

Antonio listened with parted lips and dilated eyes. He was divided between joy and terror, joy that Dorothea believed in him, and terror lest her efforts to discover the murderer should be rewarded with success. She could not foresee the horror that lay in wait for her. Burke must not know that his promised wife was the daughter of a criminal. Through Antonio they should never know. He realized that it was not only Dorothea's promise to Burke that had now forever divided them. The future of which he had dreamed had no reality. There was no honorable career open to an Indian; no outlet for his ambition. Life could offer nothing which might efface the memory of a felon's cell. He had yielded from the first to that unwritten law which debarred him from equality with the white man. He had sought for means of advancement among his people, moved by an instinct of loyalty to them. He had tested them and found them lacking. He felt within himself the genius of organization, the power of a political chief strong in patience and invincible in pursuit of a just success; but he stood alone. He was a monarch without a country; a leader without a party.

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At the moment when he had allowed his hands to be bound with undeserved fetters he made the irrevocable decision which parted him from hope and love. He made it, as life's most momentous decisions are often made, in ignorance of all the issues that hung upon his choice: but he knew that if that moment could be repeated his act would be the same, his relinquishment as complete.

"I am grateful for your kindness, Mr. Burke," he said. "Please give Miss Fairfax the assurance of my gratitude. Assure her, too, that she does me no more than justice. I am innocent of that man's death. I have had cause to wish him dead, but I have never planned or executed anything to his hurt. I am innocent, and I do not fear death. I fear only that she should grieve for me. Please tell her that I rejoice in her happiness. I am sure that you will make her happy."

Burke did not allow the instinct of an alarmed pride to rise beyond the surface of his thought. He remembered Dorothea's look when she had confessed her love for this man, now almost beneath the world's scorn, yet bearing himself as bravely as if he were Burke's equal, and sending messages to Burke's betrothed; and he kept

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his patience, giving himself credit for his forbearance.

"I will tell Miss Fairfax what you say," he replied, "but as a matter of fact, this is far from the point. Are you going to answer my questions? Do you know anything of this stranger? Can you elucidate the matter? It is an injustice to your lawyer to keep him in the dark. Give me, at any rate, a reason for your silence."

Antonio pondered before he replied. "I can only say, Mr. Burke, that I hope you will not follow up that clue. I hope you will persuade Miss Fairfax to do no more on my behalf. I am bound, as she imagines, by a certain obligation to secrecy. No one but my friends will believe in my innocence if I persist in this course; and yet I doubt if my giving you the fullest information in my power could change the course of the trial or alter the sentence that will be given. If it does not insure my safety why should I speak? Others would suffer, yet I would not be free. I am determined to say no more."

"You can not tell how much help your information would give me," said Burke, impatiently. "If you are innocent you should speak for truth and justice. Leave the result to circumstances."

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Antonio shook his head. "I appear obstinate and unreasonable," he said, with a smile. "That is not my real character, but I must submit to being misunderstood."

Burke rose to take leave, more perplexed than he cared to own by the complications of the situation. "I will see the warden and ask that you be put into a better cell," he said. "After the trial I may not be able to save you from murderers' row."

"Thank you," replied Antonio. "I would like light enough to read, and I would like to be allowed some books. It will be a great favor if you obtain that for me. As for the result of the trial, do not worry about that, Mr. Burke. A death by hanging is to be dreaded chiefly because of its ignominy; and I hope to learn enough philosophy to forget that part of it."

Burke found little to occupy him in town. He determined to return to Casa Blanca, and endeavor to secure witnesses for his side of the case. He must see Mr. Beverly's hired man; incidentally he must also see Dorothea. Long hours of solitary musing had changed the current of his thoughts from a resigned despair to courage, and even hope. He had convinced himself that Dorothea's love for Antonio was no

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more than a fancy founded upon pity. The tragic interest of his present position worked strongly upon her sympathies; but her feeling for him could not bear the strain of time and change.

All the orderly conventions of life, all practical rules of conduct and duty, were on Burke's side; and what woman can long hold out against these influences?

So he set himself to his daily task without wasting time in much self-pity. His profession had taught him confidence in his own abilities. The stubbornest of jurymen had more than once resigned his convictions to the young lawyer's persuasions, all unconscious of defeat. With the happiness of his life hanging upon the issue, Burke promised himself that he should prove no laggard in his wooing.

As he passed the gates of the white house he rode slowly and looked curiously at the place, which had a strangely deserted air. The blinds were closed at most of the windows. There was no life about the grounds. Only in the garden he caught a glimpse of a moving figure, and at his approach two hands parted the hedge, and a white face appeared in the gap.

It was Mrs. Jennings, pale and changed in her widow's weeds.

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"Are you coming to see me?" she asked.
"I have been waiting for you." He could do no less than dismount and advance to meet her.

"You wrote me a letter of sympathy," she said. "I should thank you, I suppose. Now you are on your way to see Miss Fairfax. I hear you are engaged; and I hear that you are going to defend my husband's murderer. I have been longing to see you only to tell you how I hate you for that."

Burke started in surprise at her tone, noting the wild gleam in her eyes.

"I have not lost my reason, though I see you suspect it," she added quickly. "It is a wonder I have not. Here I am, all alone in this big house, with only my memories, and the suggestion of Sam's presence everywhere about; and it is as if I had murdered him. My divorce was easily obtained! And you are going to defend the murderer!"

Burke saw that she was half beside herself, and answered soothingly:

"You ought not to be alone, Nellie. Where are the others?"

"Papa and Bessie left the day after the funeral, and mother had already gone," she answered. "They have gone on visits, anywhere to escape the talk and the miserable

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notoriety. Papa is going to sell the place. He does not intend to return. The gold mine is already sold, as I suppose you know. It is Miss Fairfax's dowry." She laughed with a savage gleam of white teeth through her parted lips.

"What do you mean?" asked Burke.

"Why, her dear papa bought it of father and Sam, meaning it as a surprise to his daughter, and intending to come here and live; and this is one reason why I wanted to see you, Harry. Mr. Fairfax is a hardened criminal. I will tell you that for your comfort, now that you are going to be his son-in-law. He and Sam had dealings in the past, and they hated each other as criminals will. My dear departed served a term in the penitentiary. I found that out after his death. Mr. Fairfax deserved the same, I know from Sam's hints. He did not know when he bought the mine here that Sam was the biggest part of the Company. He did not know Sam lived here at all; and my husband begged me to see that Dorothea did not inform him of the fact. It might not have occurred to her to mention it if I had not deliberately disobeyed my husband, and put it into her mind to send just that news in her letters to her father. I have been thinking it over, and I believe that indirectly I am Sam's

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murderer. I believe that it was Mr. Fairfax who hired the Indian to kill my husband."

Burke was more than ever convinced that solitude and unhappy thoughts had unhinged her mind.

"You must not stay here alone," he repeated. "Will you not join your family? You will be ill if you remain here. Promise me you will take care of yourself and leave detective work to those responsible. You did your best, Nellie. You have had a hard life."

The friendly solicitude of his tone did not melt her mood.

"I have been staying here to meet you. I knew you must come sooner or later. I wanted to tell you all about the miserable matter. I did not dream you would take any bribe to defend the wretch who murdered my husband, whether or not he was a hired assassin. And could you bring yourself to marry this girl, Harry, if you knew her father to be a criminal?"

"You are not yourself, Nellie," said Burke firmly. "You must let me take you to your mother. Promise me you will go this very day."

"I see you will not listen to such an unwelcome suggestion," she retorted. "You would rather believe me mad for harboring the thought;

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but evil can come as close to your beloved as it has to me. There is no magic circle drawn about her for her protection. Once I was a light-hearted girl; and then you might have thought one mad who had predicted that I should be the widow of a murdered man, a man bad enough to deserve his fate. Your Dorothea may be the daughter of a man bad enough to do the deed, or, worse yet, to plan it, and hire it done. I say there is something in the fact that the man to whom Sam sold the gold-mine, cheating him, as you must know, was an old acquaintance and a deadly enemy; and I warn you as a friend to avoid a marriage which may bring you nothing but sorrow and disgrace."

With this she turned away, and resisting Burke's repeated offers of service, silenced him with a distant wave of the hand, and disappeared like a fleeting ghost in the shadowy loneliness of the deserted house.

Burke turned away in gloomy thought, leading his horse by the bridle. It is a misfortune of the logically inductive mind, trained to link cause and effect, and to search for the hidden springs of action, that even improbable suggestions have a certain effect. By a flash of intuition outstripping the processes of reason, Burke saw that, given the possibility of this

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horrible suspicion, Lachusa's conduct acquired sudden consistency. He loved Dorothea; he would not implicate her father in the crime. In the next moment common-sense asserted itself; and Burke wondered that he could have submitted his thought for the fraction of a moment to the influence of a mind diseased by grief and jealousy.

CHAPTER XIV

Burke found Dorothea alone. She was pale and sad, but a rosy color mounted to the roots of her shining hair as he bent and kissed her hand in foreign fashion. Burke saw that she was trembling with repressed impatience, and following a new line of policy, he came at once to the point.

"I went yesterday to see Lachusa," he said. "I spent some time in his cell. It was a dismal place, dark and unhealthy, not suited to his strong young frame, that seems made for freedom and athletic exercise. He looked as if he were able to carry off the gates, like Samson at Gaza; but he submits to his fate, as if from a sense of duty, and refuses absolutely to speak. I followed up the clue you gave me. It is possible that there is something in it. We will hope for the best. I wonder what his future would be if he were freed from this charge?"

"What future is there for any man who has been accused and imprisoned?" said Dorothea. "That is the worst of it. It is so wickedly unjust."

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"He might live it down, but there is no opening for one of his race," said Burke. "I wonder that he has not tried to make more of his education. Put him and me to a competitive examination, and no doubt he would carry off all the honors; yet I live by my brains, and he has been content to be a day-laborer."

"He did it from a consistent purpose," explained Dorothea. "He thinks all labor is noble, and he wanted his people to believe in him, and to realize that he did not hold himself above them, while at the same time he was planning to give his life to their advancement. He was going about it by degrees. He has a masterly mind, and always sees the end from the beginning, and has patience as well as foresight."

"That is a characteristic of the Indian," remarked Burke. "There ought to be a great future for the red man. I blush for my own race when I see the result of their boasted civilization in its effect upon the so-called inferior races. Mrs. Aguilar is right when she says that the Indian's virtues are all his own; his vices those of the white man."

"You have learned something since I have seen you," said Dorothea.

"No one could be with Lachusa and not recognize the latent possibilities of his char-

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acter," said Burke. He was speaking with a purpose, yet not insincerely. "Even if he did the crime, I believe he did it from a motive that would almost extenuate it."

"He did not do it, of course," she replied. "But what could that motive be?"

"Excuse me if I do not tell you," he said. "Lawyers never tell their wives the secrets of their cases."

Dorothea blushed and kept silence.

Burke seated himself near the table and began to play with the trinkets upon it. It assisted his thought if his fingers were busy with some small object. He touched the picture frame, and took it up and looked at it.

"My father," commented Dorothea. "I believe I have shown it to you."

Burke nodded and looked curiously at the face before him.

"I am so worried about papa," she continued. "It is so long since I have heard. I fear that he is ill, perhaps dead. I can not rid my mind of the thought; and it is such a curious thing, last night I lay awake here, as I thought, and the moonlight shone into the room, and as plain as I see you now I saw him there seated in that very chair before my dressing-table. It did not seem a dream, it was so real; but I cried

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out and woke my aunt, and she told me I had had a nightmare. Oh, Harry, what do you think has happened to him?"

"He is probably away on a long trip. You will hear soon."

"He does not even know of my engagement," she continued. "It seems like treason to him. Of course, if he objects, that is the end of it."

"Of course," answered Burke. "I shall submit to his will, but I have great confidence in his taste and judgment. I believe he will think his Dolly could do worse."

"I did not know that you were so vain," said Dorothea, and her heart grew a little lighter in spite of herself.

Burke was in a gay mood, and he was pleased to find that Dorothea was alone. School was not in session, but the little pupils had left their books and maps behind them in the large airy room where Mrs. Aguilar had presided over the shooting of the young aboriginal idea from the time of its earliest sprouting.

Burke declaimed pieces from the Third Reader, drew pictures upon the board, and put Dorothea through an examination in geography. Then, observing the hour, he asked if her house-keeping did not include a mid-day meal, and if he were not expected to stay and share it.

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"I wonder what I can offer you," she replied. "I was to have some fruit, and there is bread and butter."

"What more do we need?" he asked. "Bread and butter spread by your hands, and figs and grapes and guavas. I will make some guava fool. It is food for the gods. Get me a strainer and a bowl, and a big spoon and some sugar, and tie an apron around my neck for the salvation of my shirt front; and do you whip the cream. I am glad there is plenty of cream."

Dorothea obeyed his instructions, smiling as she tied a large white apron close about his neck. She felt the stirring of an almost maternal tenderness as she touched his curly locks, and looked down upon his well-poised handsome head. It was as if she were already his wife, content to share life's homely duties with him, though her youth, with its illusions, was dead and buried, and the purple light of love had faded forever from her soul.

Burke took her faith for granted, and every moment wove closer the tie that bound her to him.

It is an instinct with unselfish women to find a certain pleasure in renunciation. Let duty command in unmistakable tones, and they will prove with bleeding feet the ordeal of the ploughshares.

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Burke was well pleased with the progress he had made. He did not make the mistake of overstaying his time, but took his leave while Dorothea's eyes and ears were still at his command. He left her uncertain of the time of his return. He was to ride over to Leona and pass a day or two in the neighborhood; but would return to town by the stage-road and not by Casa Blanca. He must give his time now to the conduct of his case; business before pleasure; duty before love.

He stood hat and whip in hand, as he lingered to say farewell, and Dorothea with averted eyes gave him the shy, fleeting touch of her hand.

A shadow of repressed emotion fell across his face and his lips trembled.

"Some day, perhaps, our meeting and our parting will be different," he said. "I ask nothing now. You have given me your promise, and I thank you every day of my life. All else must come freely from your heart. It must be your joy to give, or I have no pleasure in receiving."

He sprang to the saddle and was off like a flash. Dorothea watched him with a strange mingling of emotions. He had always possessed the power to stir and trouble her heart, and now she was his promised wife. She owed him a life's fidelity.

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She went to her desk and took out a faded bunch of flowers. Antonio had gathered them for her on an almost inaccessible cliff where an eagle had built its nest. With reluctant hands she placed the flowers upon the coals that smouldered in the grate, where she watched them until they were consumed; then turned with streaming eyes to resume her interrupted duties.

As the season waned the nights grew chill at Casa Blanca. Mrs. Aguilar was occupied with cares that were no part of her official duties, but became pressing with each returning winter, the need of providing food and clothing for the poor old people who were pensioners on an unfriendly soil and an indifferent national government. The noonday December sun was hot, but there was a skimming of ice over the spring in the hollow in the early morning. The children came shivering to school. A bed upon the ground, with one blanket for covering, chills even the blood of childhood.

Mrs. Aguilar made sacrifices and gave time and money which she could ill spare. She was therefore quite beside herself with indignation when a rumor reached her ears that the people of the tribe were planning an offering of garments to the dead.

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This was a custom which, in its present form, was a survival of certain primitive rites now discouraged and inveighed against by those friends of the Indians who had at heart the progress of civilization among them.

Mrs. Aguilar called upon Felipe to use his authority to forbid the proposed celebration, but he would make no promises and answer no questions. It was evident that he was not willing to risk his newly acquired popularity. There was a general reticence in regard to the plan. No one was disposed to give information. Marta, when closely questioned, acknowledged that she was heart and soul in favor of it.

"I can not sleep at night," she said, "for thinking how cold my little Fernando must be without my bosom to lie in. Should I not be willing to go without my winter shawl for the sake of warming his little body?"

To all representations as to the inutility of the sacrifice, she turned a deaf ear, and she maintained an impassive air when Mrs. Aguilar invoked the authority of the church.

"Our religion is good, too," said Marta, boldly heretical, "as good as the priest's. We love our dead people. They are still alive; but it is in no place of flames. It is like this world; and my Fernando must go cold unless I send

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him something to keep him warm. We have not done this for years, and the spirits of our people vex us."

Realizing the opposition which they were likely to encounter, the Indians made all their preparations secretly. Marta and Angela met by stealth one day in the gathering twilight at the deserted hut of boughs which Antonio had built for his sleeping place, and where his possessions were still stored undisturbed, though no lock was on the door. They entered the hut and looked awe-struck about them.

His cot bed stood neatly made, a shelf of books above it. A trunk full of clothes was at the further end. There was a chair and a table made of pine boards, and on pegs driven into the wall hung his rifle and cartridge belt. All was as he had left it, except that storms had rent the walls, and drifted sand and the stains of rain gave token of desolation and neglect.

"I have not been in here before," said Marta. "It made me too sad. I am afraid to touch his clothes. It is like stealing from my brother, who has always been good to me."

"He will never need the clothes now," said Angela who had opened the trunk and was making eager selection from its contents. "Here is a thick, warm overcoat, just the thing

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for my old husband. He used to suffer when he lived with rheumatism of the joints. I do not know that he is any better where he is, for not a thing have I sent him in all these years. I may as well take a whole suit. Antonio will not send for his best clothes for the hanging, and they will not take much pains with his laying-out."

Marta began to weep violently. "How can you say such things?" she cried. "You have no heart nor feeling. Come away. You shall not have the things. Not a stitch of clothing shall you touch, wicked woman that you are."

Angela smiled cynically. "You will not gain by speaking ill of your elders," she said. "You can best serve Antonio by sending his things before him to the other world. If he grudges them to my husband they may settle it between them there; but Antonio always had a generous heart."

Marta continued to sob, but mindful of Fernando's interests, and sure of Antonio's affection for his little nephew, she made choice of such garments as would serve her turn.

The night was chill, and a wailing wind sang in the tree tops. On the level sward before old Diego's house, a great fire of oak logs had been built as soon as darkness fell, protected on one

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side by a windbreak of wattled boughs. Around the fire and watching its fierce flaming, a crowd of picturesque dark-skinned figures were collected, while in an outer circle the women sat upon the ground, wrapped in brightly-colored shawls and blankets.

At nine o'clock a wailing chant was started. It began like the sighing of the wind in the trees. Its minor cadences were reminiscent of the very music of nature herself, the noise of the elements, the voices of the waves, the language of the beasts of the forest. Then it rose higher into wild lamentations for the dead. Each heart recalled its sorrow and mourned for the departed.

Meantime, old Diego was bringing from his house roll after roll of bright new calico and shining muslin fresh from the store. He stood with uplifted arms while a circle of the older Indians knelt bare-headed before him. He invoked the gods of the air and the invisible regions of the dead; then he gave to the heads of each family a portion of the cloth thus dedicated, in which they wrapped the garments to be sent to the departed.

The leaders of the ceremony moved back and forth before the fire, keeping rhythmic time to the sound of the sacred rattle which Diego

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wielded with ever-increasing fervor. The words which they loudly chanted were apostrophes to their friends in the spirit world, asking their acceptance of the gifts they brought.

The women, meantime, had prepared their offerings, and they cast the garments and calico over the heads of the men who knelt in a circle about the fire, now a bed of glowing coals. The prayers and chants continued, and when all the clothing had been presented it was collected and deposited upon the fire, which leaped to consume it.

The ashes were collected and buried in a narrow trench. Money was flung upon the ground by some mourners more rashly generous than the rest. It made no difference to these brave souls that the hoardings of a month were scrambled for by shouting urchins. They had done their part, and left the rest to the gods of the dead.

Since the gifts were accepted and the shades propitiated, the wails of mourning were replaced by shouts of joy. The young people took their places in the circle. They were now free to conclude the fiesta as they pleased, and each sought his favorite pastime. The elder men began the war-dance, that reminder of the past which stirred the heart with thoughts of the

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wild freedom of the days of power and plenty and national greatness; and the younger generation watched them, wondering vaguely what relation these symbolic acts could bear to the prospects of the future and the present conditions of their life. Then by common consent the hearts of the young men turned to their first love, the gambling game of peon.

"I shall write to Father Gaspara," said Mrs. Aguilar severely next day to Felipe, who stood shamefacedly before her. "He must know what is going on here. You are all baptized members of the Catholic church; but on the whole you are no better than heathen. You gamble and dance the war-dances, and you go cold and naked to burn up yards and yards of valuable cloth and hats and coats and trousers; and you fling away money while the children's stomachs are weak from fasting. It is a shame, Felipe. How are you ever going to keep pace with the new ideas? How are you ever to improve and hold your own in the struggle for existence among the white men when you act like foolish children?"

"Let Father Gaspara come if he will," replied Felipe, in a surly tone. "It is now three years since we have seen him, and every year there

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have been rumors of his coming, and we have strained our eyes to look for him, and each time he has disappointed us. How can we mind the priest if he forgets us?"

Mrs. Aguilar, finding herself put upon the defensive, compromised matters by gaining Felipe's promise that the practices she disliked should be stopped. This promise was the easier to make since in reaction from their late enthusiasm the people were more occupied than before with mundane considerations, and interest centred chiefly upon the trial of Antonio Lachusa, which was to take place within the week.

Mrs. Aguilar believed that Father Gaspara would be willing to improve the occasion by an immediate parochial visit; and the reply which she received from him proved that she was not mistaken.

CHAPTER XV

Father Gaspara descended from the wagon which had brought him up the mountain, and was greeted by the crowding, smiling faces of his dark-skinned parishioners. The padre might delay years in his coming, and at the first sight of him the old reverence of affection would awaken among his protégés, whose love once gained is of a fidelity seldom seen among men.

It has been said of Father Gaspara that his nature contained the three warring elements of poet, soldier and priest. Time had dealt hardly with the poetical tendency, though the soldier still spoke in the erect carriage of the vigorous form, the flash of the commanding eye, and the alert decision with which he confronted the problems of life.

At Mrs. Aguilar's appeal he had come at once to seek and save such wandering sheep as had escaped his fold, to uproot the tares which Marco, for his own ends, had been mischievously sowing, and to confirm the faithful in their allegiance to their mother Church.

Although the notice of his coming had been

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too sudden to allow of elaborate preparation, all had been done that was possible for his comfort. A ramada, or brush-hut, had been built for his accommodation, a bed and chairs had been borrowed from the school-house, and the church itself, of which only one wall was standing, had been repaired with sapling beams and wattled walls; and within it an altar was set up, decked with drawn-work hangings, the blessed candles and the plaster figure of the patron saint.

All day the Indians thronged this rude sanctuary for service and confession, for baptism and marriage, and all the delayed sacraments of the church. They came from far and near, old and young, eager for the offices of religion. At night they had a fiesta with races and games; but they did not gamble, and they did not dance, for the padre's eye was upon them.

Father Gaspara supped at the school-house with Mrs. Aguilar and her niece. Dorothea regarded the priest with the ardent hero-worship of youth, for she knew that he had sat for a character in her favorite book, "Ramona," a book which in pathos, tenderness, and humanity comes close to, if it does not deserve, the first place among the few great American novels.

Father Gaspara's hair had been glossy black

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when he had married Ramona to her Alessandro. It was now streaked with gray. He had then been disheartened by the outrages heaped upon the harmless Mission Indians, who were every year further exiled from their homes by the constant aggression of the white man's greed. He had long since ceased to hope that this could end except with the extermination of the race.

Being a practical man, and not given to useless sentimentality, he made no moan and wrote no book. The poem that was shaped in thought in the days of his ardent youth might have been the epic of a dying race; but the song remained unsung. The interests of life change with increasing years from the general to the particular. Father Gaspara to-day was concerning himself with Angela's rheumatism, Marco's incendiary talk, Pedro's need of extreme unction, and the future of the Indians was not the subject of his speculations.

Dorothea, however, idealized him with all the ardor of a youthful imagination. He reminded her of Michael Angelo's Moses, with the grand head and flowing beard. He, too, was a law-giver to these simple people who knew him as their friend and trusted him infinitely. She knew that he had the will to serve them. She

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wondered if he could have the influence to help Antonio in his peril.

In the terrible labyrinth of the law, sympathy is of little avail; but perhaps he could win Antonio's confidence, and command him by the authority of the Church to speak. Dorothea was sure that Antonio's safety depended on his revealing the name of the stranger who had been present so mysteriously at Casa Blanca, the stranger who was, she was convinced, the murderer of Samuel Jennings.

Father Gaspara had heard of the murder. It was the chief subject of conversation among the Indians. He listened with interest to Mrs. Aguilar's account of Antonio's history, with which he was already partially acquainted.

"I met Mrs. Leigh years ago," he said. "She came to see me, as so many tourists do, out of curiosity as readers of Mrs. Jackson's book; but she was not like the rest. She had a real interest in the Indians. She told me of her plans for her Indian charge, and showed me his picture and some of his examination papers. He was then a little lad, and she was as proud of him as if she were his mother. I doubted then the success of her experiment. Yes, I am sorry to say it, I doubted. I have never seen much accomplished by individual enthusiasm.

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Mrs. Jackson, too, was an enthusiast. She put her heart's blood into her books; yet what good have they done? Have they changed public opinion? To a slight extent, perhaps; but for practical justice in public affairs there is too much politics in this country, my friend. A message of the angel Gabriel would not be heeded, if he stood in the way of the election of some third-rate congressman in his district. Yet I hoped, I really hoped, that it would turn out better than this; a murderer caught red-handed, that is too much!"

Both ladies protested, and Dorothea said quickly, "I beg your pardon, Father Gaspara, but Antonio was not caught red-handed. If he is convicted it will be a crime against truth."

The padre fastened his keen eyes upon her. "I wish you might plead as his lawyer," he said. "It would be like that lady in your poet Shakespeare's play; but things do not happen that way nowadays. I have talked with people in town about the murder, and they think the Indian deserves to be hung."

Dorothea clasped her hands together beneath the table. She tried to control the expression of the anguish that wrung her heart.

"There is one thing that I would like to beg of you," she said. "When you return to town

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will you not visit Antonio in his cell? The lawyer who defends him is a friend of mine, and he thinks that if Antonio could be forced to break his silence and give his own account of all that happened on the day of the murder, it would give him the clue that he is looking for. Without it he is handicapped. There is some reason why Antonio will not speak, an obligation to secrecy, as he himself has acknowledged; but the obligation to truth is greater. An innocent man should not be allowed to suffer that the guilty one may go free."

"Nor is it very likely to happen," said Father Gaspara. He talked with an evident Spanish accent, and he had a strong, penetrating voice, like one accustomed to speak with authority. "No, my dear young lady. I am afraid your enthusiasm misleads you. I will visit the Indian, and in the worst event prepare him for death; but that I can help him to escape the gallows I very much doubt. I would do it if I could, for the sake of Mrs. Leigh and her experiment, which has been watched quite curiously by friends of the Indians in all parts of the country. The result of it will give those people satisfaction who repeat that brutal saying, 'There is no good Indian but a dead Indian.' It is a pity. I am sorry, indeed."

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The padre's words stabbed Dorothea like the wounds of malice. It was hard for her to maintain her composure, and Mrs. Aguilar, coming to her rescue, changed the subject of the conversation.

It was in consequence of Dorothea's suggestion that Antonio received, a few days later, a call from Father Gaspara. He was surprised at the entrance of a priest into his cell, and at the first moment it seemed to him that the fatal sentence had already been pronounced, and that his visitor had come to prepare him for the end. Then he chided himself for the nervous weakness which such a fancy evidenced. In reality, the strain of suspense was beginning to tell upon him. He pined for freedom and the fresh air of the hills; for active use of his strong young limbs, and something of human interest to occupy his thought. He was cut off from his kind in terrible isolation; and he almost longed for the moment that should bring the end, let it be what it might.

The priest introduced himself and explained the reason of his visit. "You are one of my flock," he said. "I read the funeral service over your mother, and I baptized you. I also knew your patroness, Mrs. Leigh."

At the mention of this name Antonio's face brightened.

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"I am glad that she is not now alive," continued the padre. "This would have been a terrible disappointment to her."

"I have thought of that," said Antonio, sadly. "Yes, it is well that she can not know."

"You should have thought of that before," replied Father Gaspara. "Your life should have been lived as if in the presence of a cloud of witnesses. You were selected as a representative man. Upon the success of Mrs. Leigh's experiment may have hung the future of your race; who knows? If you had made yourself what she hoped when she gave you your education, others might have been emboldened to point to you and say, 'Behold what an Indian may become. Shall we not work for their advancement? Shall we not give them citizenship?' It may be that you would not have this influence upon the world, but no one has a right to do less than his best, leaving the result with God."

Antonio bent his head before this lecture, as if before a tempest from which he could not escape.

"If you die upon the gallows," continued Father Gaspara, "it will be well that Mrs. Leigh was left in ignorance of your failure to fulfill her hopes. Is there any chance that you may

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escape? Have you anything to say in your own defence?"

"Only that I am innocent," replied Antonio.

"Can you prove this?"

Antonio shook his head. "I can give no evidence as to the real criminal," he said, "not even for the sake of saving my credit, and all that seems to you to be involved in it. There are duties higher than the duty we owe to ourselves and our reputation. There was once a perfect man who made himself of no reputation."

Father Gaspara was somewhat displeased that the weapons of Holy Writ should thus be turned against him. He believed that the Indian's education had made him only a hardened sophist.

"If the worst comes I will wish to prepare you for death," he said, ignoring the remark. "I hope you may be ready to confess."

"I am not a Catholic," answered Antonio. "I should confess to you only as to a man, and that I have resolved for the sake of others not to do even in view of death."

"I am sorry then that I can not help you," said the padre. "Sorry, very sorry, that you have left the fold in which you were placed by baptism. I will pray that your heart may be

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softened, and that you may be restored to it."

He looked with keen, kindly eyes full of the shadow of a real regret at the young reprobate, the possible hope of his race, who was to be cut off in his prime by the shameful death of the gallows; and he left him, promising to repeat his visit.

This conversation had not served to enliven Antonio's sunken spirits. It pained him to think that his end must reflect discredit upon his patroness. "But she has the larger vision," he said to himself. "I have tried to do my duty. She will know and understand."

CHAPTER XVI

Burke was pacing his office floor with head bent and hands clasped behind him, a favorite attitude when in deep reflection. Antonio's trial would open that day at two o'clock. The young lawyer felt like a general who goes into battle as the leader of a forlorn hope. He could foresee no possibility of success. He had traveled far and near to secure witnesses. He had followed clues which ended like desert streams that sink into the sand.

"If it were not for that unfortunate note calling Jennings to the gold-mine I should have some expectation of talking over the jury," he thought. "As it is I fear I can not avoid the evidence of malice aforethought. No one can be made to doubt that Antonio struck the blow; and with the other conclusion he is already condemned. I will do my best, but I never conducted so weak a case." He felt the more poignant regret since he had himself learned to believe in his client's innocence. It was not his habit to allow his sympathies to outweigh his judgment; but the vague impressions that come

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from personal association are evidence decisive enough, though not of a sort to be formulated in court.

Burke had studied Antonio's character with keen impartiality, and had reached the conclusion that he was incapable of planning deliberate murder.

A tap at the door announced visitors, and Mr. Wilson and his younger daughter entered. It was the first time that Burke had seen them since the murder, and all felt a shade of uneasy constraint.

"We want you to help us, Burke," said Mr. Wilson, with an effort to resume his old manner of intimate cordiality. "We are just leaving for San Francisco, and I have bought Nellie's ticket with the rest. We want to get off before this trial begins; but at the eleventh hour Mrs. Jennings refuses to go. More than that, she insists that she will be present at the trial. She seems to find her only satisfaction in the hope of revenge rather than justice. Her mind is a little unsettled, I think. I wonder if you would be willing to try to influence her."

"I am afraid I should be the last one for that," replied Burke. "She is very angry with me for undertaking the defence."

"We are all disappointed, and hurt," said

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Bessie. "We thought we could count on you as a friend of the family. After this we do not feel that there can be any sympathy between us."

"I am sorry for that," said Burke. "A lawyer can not consider personal feelings, or pick and choose his cases."

"No," said Mr. Wilson, impatiently, "I understand that well enough. The women are all wrought up over it, as is natural. But we must not miss our train. My wife is to meet us in San Francisco, and we are going to take the steamer to Vancouver. If Nellie still refuses to leave, will you have an oversight of her, keep her from the trial, if you can, and see that she does not make a display of her feelings there."

"I will do my best," Burke promised, and after a short conversation, in which Bessie refused to join, Mr. Wilson arose and took leave, preceded by his daughter, who vouchsafed only a distant farewell.

At lunch, for which Burke had little appetite, he met one of his brethren of the bar.

"If you lose your case, will you appeal?" asked his friend. "I suppose if you choose to take advantage of all possible technicalities you may prolong your client's life two or three

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years, as is the fashion lately. I wondered if you were prepared to do this. It takes money, for one thing."

"As a rule I do not discuss my plans beforehand," replied Burke, "but I don't mind telling you that my client has forbidden me to move for a new trial of the case, or to attempt any sort of stay of proceedings. He has no money; he does not wish his friends to use any extraordinary means to raise money; and he wishes the decision of this court to be final, let it be what it may."

"Well, I am sorry to have you connected with this case, Burke. Your reputation has been a brilliant one chiefly because you have used care in the selection of those whom you have defended; and a young lawyer should consider that. He should choose his clients as he chooses his wife. You will sink in the popular esteem from the moment you appear as counsel for an Indian murderer. What possible motive could lead you to undertake it?"

"Some one must defend him," replied Burke.

"Then let it not be a young man with a reputation to make. If you lose your case it will not advance your credit; if you gain it you will incur the popular ill-will, and it will stick to you. The feeling is very strong in town

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against the murderer. The wife of the murdered man has been seen in the hotel and on the streets, in her deep mourning with her white haggard face, and the very sight of her is a piteous appeal for justice. If you know what is good for you, you will not let her appear in court. Let her fix those eyes on the jurymen and they will vote for conviction to a man."

Burke began to suspect that this was Eleanor's purpose in opposing the wishes of her family. She owed him a grudge, and wounded pride would operate more forcibly with her than regard for her husband's memory. This was an added source of uneasiness, and an hour before the hearing of his case Burke sent up his card to Mrs. Jennings. He was at once admitted to the parlor, where she was seated alone.

"I did not expect to see you until we met in the court-room," she said, after greeting him distantly. "I suppose you know that I am one of Mr. Bradford's witnesses."

"No," said Burke, in surprise. "I did not know that, nor did your father, whom I saw this morning. It will be very painful for you, and very unnecessary. I can even now arrange with Bradford that you need not appear."

"I am determined to be present," she re-

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plied. "It is quite useless to discuss the matter."

"Can I have no hope of influencing you?" he asked.

"You have no influence with me," she answered. "There is a deep chasm forever between us. You are dead to me as much as Sam is."

Antonio was so weary of the monotony of his imprisonment that he found relief in the opening of his trial; and took a sort of impersonal interest in the proceedings, as if it concerned some other man, or as if he were benumbed to the consciousness of the danger in which he stood, like the traveller who lies down in the snow-drift and almost welcomes the coming of the end.

He watched the faces of the men upon whom his fate depended, and he saw in their stolid, unintelligent countenances no recognition of the responsibility of their position. The people who crowded the visitors' seats were idle loungers and women of the morbidly emotional class who attend a murder trial for the thrill of excitement which breaks the dead level of a sordid existence.

There was no manifestation of sympathy for

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him. He was only an Indian. When he went back to his cell its emptiness was more than ever hateful to him. He wondered if he should see Dorothea before the end. He did not dare to ask it, but at night he slept peacefully and dreamed of her.

The witnesses for the prosecution occupied much time in the telling of their story, Burke submitting them to a minute cross-examination with no effective result. In the first day or two little was developed that had not been brought to light in the preliminary hearing; but every detail of the evidence, adroitly manipulated by the prosecuting attorney, told steadily against the prisoner. Bradford was proud of the impregnability of his case, and of the logical consistency with which each fact had been made to bear upon the other, but he was careless of no advantage and unrelaxing in vigilance, for Burke was an opponent not to be despised.

It was Bradford's professional creed that the judgment is influenced unconsciously by the emotions, and that the dramatic element is one that should never be neglected in the conduct of a case. Two of his witnesses had been chosen with this idea in mind, and the effect produced by their appearance justified his calculations.

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Mrs. Jennings entered shrouded in crape, an eloquent example of widowed devotion. When she lifted her veil and turned her appealing eyes from judge to jury, there was something in the wild fervor of the look which moved the heart from its judicial equilibrium. Her statement was of little consequence, but the manner of its utterance—the voice breaking into a sob, the little hand clenched in an appeal for justice—told powerfully upon her hearers.

When she left the court-room, an Indian woman was called into the witness-box. Antonio started as he recognized his sister. Marta was as haggard and worn with grief as if she herself stood in peril of death. She fixed her eyes upon her brother, while tears streamed down her cheeks.

Burke could not conceal his astonishment at this appearance, and he looked at Bradford with the keen defiance of the duellist who meets an unexpected *coup*. It had been Burke's decision that Marta's absence was advisable at this time, and he had contrived that she should spend a fortnight in the shelter of her cousin's house in the remote Indian village of Leona, where she would be far from the rumors of the trial, and free from the necessity of listening or replying to painful suggestions.

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He roused himself now to defeat Bradford's purpose, resorting to every legal device of objection, appeal and counter-question to shield the helplessly harassed victim of the prosecution's cross-examination. But Bradford knew his witness well. Marta's exaggerated fear of the power of the law, her desire to propitiate it by any sacrifice, her adoring affection for her brother, these feelings, mingled, opposed, confused, in her tortured and ignorant mind, were played upon unfeelingly until she was led into a wild incongruity of admission, implication and denial.

The prosecuting attorney scored the points he made and bade the jury note them. Burke, who was pale to the lips, protested in vain. The court was with the prosecution. Marta was led weeping from the box, having declared that her brother, the noblest of men, had always been her truest friend, that he had hated her betrayer, and had one day expressed a wish that he might kill him. Beyond this she defied judge and jury, appealed to our Lady in heaven, was ready to lay down her life, to be cut to pieces inch by inch, to submit to any proof—in protestation of Antonio's innocence.

It was unfortunate for Burke that time did not allow the calling of a witness for the defence

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until the morning; and, as Bradford had nicely calculated, the impression thus made must remain till then uncombated. Burke was not accustomed to defeat, and he smarted under it.

Antonio did not sleep that night. He felt that his case was hopeless, and for the first time an unconquerable longing for freedom and for life awoke within him. It was the cry of his strong young manhood outraged by the prospect of so cruel an end. He flung himself upon his narrow bed and wept and groaned, torn by the storm of feeling. A strong man's tears are terrible. In them there is no healing, but only bitterness and despair.

At dawn he rose, ashamed to face the sunlight, calling himself a coward, and wondering whether a woman's soul had taken possession of his body. The warden with his breakfast brought him a small box and grinned as he handed it to him.

"Flowers, by the smell," he remarked. "Some woman sent 'em, I'll be bound. It's wonderful what a notion women have of sending flowers to murderers. The last one we hanged here, and he was no beauty either, you might say he was buried in flowers."

Antonio waited till he was alone, and then opened the box with trembling fingers. Upon

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a bed of lemon blossoms whose fragrance filled the cell lay a folded paper containing these words: "Be brave, Antonio. There are worse things than to suffer innocently. Death is swallowed up in the victory of faith. There is no shame except the shame of sin. Judge and jury may make a mistake, but your heart knows and I know that you are innocent. Therefore, my friend, be brave."

No name was signed, but Antonio knew the writer, and he kissed the words with a great uplifting of the heart. This was what he needed. This was that for which he had been waiting, the lack of which had made him recreant. To doubt her faith in him was to despair. Once sure of that he was a man strong to face and conquer the worst that life can send.

He placed the note close to his heart, he kissed the flowers and laid his face upon them and drank their fragrance as a solace to his soul. It was as if Dorothea herself were near him. He smiled with calm confidence as he would have smiled to reassure her if he could have met her eyes.

"I will be brave," he said. "You need not fear for me after this. A knight with his lady's favor on his heart will go gladly down among the lions."

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The testimony for the defence began with some show of hope for Antonio. Burke had several witnesses to testify to the visit to Casa Blanca, on the day of the murder, of the mysterious stranger who had suddenly disappeared. He had been traced to the hotel in town where he had spent the preceding night. His name was found upon the register as William Thompson. The precautions which Fairfax had taken to conceal his identity made any clue difficult to follow.

A porter at the hotel testified that the stranger had evidently wished to escape notice. His baggage consisted only of a travelling case, which he carried in his hand. The porter had observed that the numerous labels with which this case had once been covered had been removed.

When the horse was recovered the carriage was found to be demolished by the runaway, and the travelling case, together with the whip and lap-robe, had disappeared, having evidently been appropriated by some chance thief.

The foreign-looking belt with the silver buckle was alluded to. The stiletto with the wrought silver handle was produced, and a possible resemblance was detected between it and the buckle of the belt.

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Witnesses from among the Indians and other acquaintances of Antonio testified that they had never seen such a weapon in the possession of the prisoner.

The weight of evidence remained in favor of the prosecution. Bradford made a short plea in which every word told. He pitilessly exposed the weakness of the defence. He showed how a deep-rooted animosity had existed in the mind of the prisoner against the postmaster, from the day of his arrival at Casa Blanca. He would not deny that the motive was a powerful one. The prisoner had suffered family wrongs, but it was not given to him to avenge such wrongs.

An emotional nature had been carried off its balance, but there was nothing emotional in the method of the deed. It was characterized by cold-blooded malice. A plot was laid. Jennings was decoyed to a lonely spot. The surprise had been complete. The Indian had sprung upon him from the rear, overborne him in the fury of his attack, and plunged a knife into the spot where death would be the certain result of the blow.

The postmaster had gone armed from a habit of caution; but suspecting nothing from the messenger who had brought the note, he had allowed his close approach. He had had no

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opportunity to defend himself, but had suddenly been sent into eternity with all his sins upon his head. Cold-blooded deliberation had characterized each feature of this revolting crime. The attorney left justice in the hands of intelligent men to whom blood thus shed by treachery should not cry out in vain.

The speech produced a great sensation. It was with difficulty that applause was repressed among the spectators.

As Burke began his plea, Dorothea and her aunt entered the court-room and took the seats which had been reserved for them among the visitors. Antonio met Dorothea's eyes. They were full of heroic encouragement. Mrs. Aguilar was thickly veiled to hide her tears.

Burke spoke eloquently and well, but he spoke on a losing side. He needed only the link that should connect the stranger with the crime, but the lack of it was fatally evident. He reminded the jury of the circumstantial nature of the evidence. No eye had seen the prisoner commit the crime. As for motive, there were various motives in many minds that might be adduced in this connection, for the dead man had been almost universally hated. It was not his purpose to speak evil of the dead; but to remind them that it was not as if a man

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of blameless life had perished, or a man so popular that admitted hatred would fasten suspicion upon an enemy.

Who was this mysterious stranger who had come and gone like a thief in the night, who had been traced from the time he had left town to the very time of the commission of the murder, but who had baffled detection by the elaborate preparations he had made to escape it? Not until this man had been found and enabled to defend himself from the suspicion which must attach to such evidence of guilt as secrecy implies, should another man, the horrified witness of the crime, be accused of complicity in it, much less be suspected as the principal. The stranger arrives at Casa Blanca, following some well-matured and pre-determined plan. The Indian met by chance becomes his messenger. The crime is done, and the murderer escapes unpursued. The Indian, who remains with the daring of innocence alone with the dead, bends over the corpse in pity and closes the glazed eyes. The man is dead whom he, with many others who had suffered injustice or abuse at his hands, had more than once had reason to wish punished; but he is punished by another hand. Only pity remains. Strong in innocence, he allows himself to be bound and

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committed, relying upon the justice of that law which condemns no man until crime is proved against him. What has been proved in this case that would not as well apply to the stranger if at this moment he should present himself here at the bar of justice confessing his guilt? Shall a man be sent into eternity to answer for another's crime simply because the cry for vengeance would demand a victim, some victim, any victim, to satisfy a popular clamor? Let this clamor die into silence. Let the voices of right and reason prevail; and let no man give consent to a sentence which he would not willingly incur if chance should make him the solitary spectator of a fearful crime.

The closing arguments of the state were terse and effectual; the judge's charge was a brief résumé of the law applicable to the case; then came the moment when the jury retired to make their conclusion of life or death for the prisoner. Dorothea's heart beat to suffocation. Moments seemed like hours, and she had lived ages in the time that elapsed before the return of the foreman to announce the verdict which had in reality been reached with unusual celerity.

The verdict was: "Guilty of murder in the first degree."

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Antonio's eyes met Dorothea's. They said to her, "Be brave for my sake. I am not afraid."

Dorothea's spoke to him. Their message was: "Be brave for my sake. I will help you by my courage."

Mrs. Aguilar fainted away. In the confusion consequent upon her removal into the open air, Burke stood by Dorothea and took her hand. "The sentence will be given Tuesday," he said. "I should prefer that you did not hear it."

"As you please," said Dorothea quietly. "My aunt is better now, and Mrs. Hereford is waiting for us in her carriage. We are going to spend some time at Magnolia ranch."

"I am glad to have you there," he replied. "I am glad you are so strong. I hope you will keep up for my sake."

"I will keep up," she answered, and she allowed him to press her hand and say his farewells almost unanswered. Her eyes regarded him, but her thoughts were far away.

As they drove through the fragrant twilight beside the shining water, the evening star sending a tremulous path of light across the western waves, the mountains rising afar in the glamour of purple mists, Dorothea saw only a manly figure standing alone to hear the terrible words: "To be hung by the neck till he is dead." She

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saw the gallows, and a shapely head crowned with the fatal black cap. She saw the tightened noose, the quivering limbs.

The world might deck itself with stars and purple sunsets. There was no joy that could atone for its injustices.

CHAPTER XVII

Burke did not intrude upon Dorothea. He felt that time and absence might be his most powerful allies. By his advice Mrs. Hereford had taken her guest to a seaside resort far enough from the associations of the last few months to remove Dorothea into a new sphere of thought. Mrs. Aguilar returned to her school, and Burke was well content that her influence should be for the time in abeyance. He felt that Dorothea had been under a potent spell which had rapt her into a world of unrealities where the conventions of ordinary life had no force; and it would be well for her that this dream world should fade into the light of common day. He had stood near Antonio when sentence was pronounced; he had followed him to press his hand in sympathy; and he had then tried to take up the interrupted current of daily affairs, finding it difficult to give them his attention.

He avoided his friends who might discuss the subject of his thoughts. He changed the hour of his meals to a time at which the restaurant

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was unfrequented; and by this means he found himself alone at table one evening with a man who had eagerly followed his movements and at last seated himself near him with the evident purpose of entering into conversation.

"Mr. Burke?" asked the stranger. "I have been trying to meet you ever since I read the paper containing the account of the trial of the Indian for murder, and I flatter myself that I am the man you were looking for without knowing it."

"What do you mean?" inquired Burke.

"Well, I have a piece of evidence that would have helped your case. I don't know but that you might get a new hearing on the strength of it."

"What is that?" asked Burke, with eager interest.

"My name is Josiah Jackson," said the stranger. "I'm a commission merchant at Mazatlan, and I often run up and down on these coast steamers. The last time I landed here was on the nineteenth of September, the day but one before this murder was committed, and I sold a dagger like the one described in this paper here to a man on board the steamer who would answer well enough to the description of the man you were trying to find. His

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name, however, was John Seymour, not William Thompson. Both may have been aliases. He was not dressed in a rough outing suit, but quite richly, like a man of wealth. He looked like a gentleman, and he smoked first-class cigars. He was an unsociable chap, and kept off by himself until the very last day, when he noticed me and the Spanish dagger that I was using as a paper-cutter. It is of the best Ferrara steel, and will bend like a willow wand. He asked me to sell it to him; said he was collecting curious weapons, and had a South American belt with a silver buckle made to reproduce the sacred stone of the Incas which would suit the silver handle and sheath to a T. As he had set his heart on it I let him have it for a good price."

"You would recognize the dagger?"

"You bet," was the reply.

Burke left his supper untasted. "Come with me," he said briefly. "I will make it worth your while."

"I will do it just to satisfy my curiosity," replied Mr. Jackson.

As they went he minutely described the weapon, particularizing a small notch in the blade and relating the history connected with it. When Burke drew the dagger from his

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desk and held it before his eyes the identification was complete.

"It only remains to find the sheath," said Mr. Jackson, and he drew a picture of it with the skill of a practiced draughtsman, added some verbal memoranda to the sketch, and handed it to Burke triumphantly.

"With that little bit of information you might have come out better," he said.

"This is extremely important, Mr. Jackson," said Burke, "and I thank you heartily. If you will leave me your address I will send for you if I should need you as a witness. I suppose I may count on you?"

"I'll be glad to help you out," he answered. "One Indian more or less in the world don't signify; but I'd really like to know if that high-bred, unsociable chap was planning a murder all the time he was smoking his cigars."

Antonio heard with alarm that the identification of the dagger pointed to that of the murderer. He absolutely refused to allow his lawyer to petition for a new trial. His mind was attuned to the heroic serenity of a martyr inspired by his faith to die with smiling lips. To waver in his purpose would be to falter in devotion to Dorothea. He realized more practically than before the nature of that disgrace

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and contumely, from association with which he had delivered her. Through Burke he had begged her not to visit him before the end. "She must not be seen speaking to an Indian convict," he had said, and Burke had agreed with him.

Failing to persuade his unreasonable client, Burke did not communicate to him another possibility which he had been considering, and without announcing his intention he left on the night train for Sacramento. The Governor's wife was his cousin. This was a fact of minor importance where abstract justice was concerned. The Governor was not a man to yield to personal influence, least of all to feminine persuasions, but his wife was a woman of infinite tact, and by those indirect methods which clever women can employ unsuspected, she was able to advance causes which she had deeply at heart, even in the realm of politics. Burke's family was one of the most influential in the state, with an enviable record of public services. He was the last survivor in his line, but his name had weight, and his father's memory was still a power to conjure with in a society warm-hearted enough to preserve the ties of friendship beyond one generation.

Burke was enabled to reach the Governor's

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ear. He was given such time as was needed for the full presentation of the subject he had at heart. The Governor listened with strict impartiality; yet, in spite of himself, his knowledge of Burke's absolute honesty and unemotional rectitude led him to yield an easier credence to his view of the case. He entered into it heart and soul. It possessed peculiar features which interested him. He sat up at night alone reviewing the evidence.

Burke did not dare to urge haste. He spent a couple of weeks with his cousin, being feasted and lionized, and condemned to dance attendance at balls, concerts and public receptions. He became decidedly popular and was offered a lucrative position in the state government by the father of one of the pretty girls with whom he danced. There are avenues of advancement open to a man who is related to the Governor, and has handsome brown eyes which say far more than he intends.

But Burke's heart was with Dorothea by the seashore, and his thoughts were often with Antonio in his cell. He was impatient for release; and at last the Governor admitted him to a private interview.

"I have taken all the time you have given me," he said. "I suppose you are growing as

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nervous as if your own neck was in peril. Well, I can not grant a pardon. I do not consider myself justified by the evidence. How did the Indian become possessed of the dagger, still supposing that he committed the crime? The stranger disappeared. Who can say that he was not himself murdered and robbed in the mountains? The Indians were most of them drunk that day. On the other hand, it is possible, quite possible, that your suppositions are correct. We can not proceed upon a mere supposition; but I do feel justified in commuting the sentence from hanging to imprisonment for life. Personally I am opposed to capital punishment; and such a sentence satisfies my idea of extreme justice. I hope it will in a measure satisfy you."

Burke expressed his gratitude. As a lawyer this was as much as he had dared to hope. He was so full of joy in his success and in the prospect of his return to Dorothea with the news, that he showed far less sorrow than was fitting in his parting with the pretty girl, who forthwith dismissed him not unregretted from her thoughts.

Father Gaspara was with Antonio in his dismal cell when the news of the commutation of the sentence reached him, grudgingly an-

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nounced by the warden, who felt the chagrin of a stage manager whose star actor disappoints him at the eleventh hour, requiring the return of all tickets at the door. Several hundred spectators would be disappointed in a promised sensation. "And what's the good of it?" he queried. "A man might as well be dead as buried alive in a prison."

Father Gaspara wrung Antonio's hand with kindly sympathy, feeling an emotion which surprised himself. This Indian heretic had won the heart of the soldier-like priest by the genuine manliness of his patience. "I prayed that you might be given space to repent and to find the way home into the Church," he said. "Now you will have time, a lifetime, for thought and reflection. There may be grace, not punishment, in that."

Antonio was glad. The instinct of youthful strength rejoiced in the grant of a new life, any life, the narrowest, most fettered, in exchange for the cruel ignominy of the halter and the convict's grave. His thoughts sang a pæan of joy as he considered Dorothea's satisfaction. She had escaped a lifelong regret. He had been willing to give his life that she might be free from an inherited curse which would brand her and her children with disgrace, but his own

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death upon the gallows, he had foreseen, would cast a haunting shadow into the background of her happiest thought. Now she would be able to forget him. The convict in a distant prison would have her sympathy, but his image would fade little by little from the heart that would be full of other loves and interests. Antonio had walked too far within the shadows of the dark valley to feel a selfish sadness upon reaching this conclusion. On the contrary, he was uplifted as far beyond the things of earth as if he had already died, and could survey the future with the clear vision of a disembodied spirit.

He rejoiced in the success of the sacrifice which he had made. Each day that he should spend in prison would be a day dedicated to her service. His life could not be useless, vague and empty lived in the inspiration of this consciousness.

Dorothea was seated on the sand watching the waves of the surf in their slow retreat across the shelving beach, where they spread out a wide strip of foam like a flounce of delicate lace upon the swaying garment of a Nereid advanced and withdrawn to the rhythm of her dancing feet. There was a peachy bloom in the sky,

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and the water shone with opalescent tints, melting into the soft color of the distant headlands. In front of her the sky-line was broken here and there by a white sail, receding into the space beyond the curving shoulder of the ocean.

She was sunk in a melancholy reverie, and glad of loneliness and the wide outlook over the water. There is consolation in vast spaces where the soul can lose itself in a realization of the pettiness of life's grinding cares.

"Like as the waves make to the pebbly shore, so do our moments hasten to their end." These words sang themselves over and over in her mind. Yes, there was an end to everything, to joy, and grief, and life, and love, and every passion of the restless human heart, beating as ineffectually against the barriers of fate as these fretted waves against the shore.

There was a step upon the gravel, and Dorothea looked up in surprise as Burke's voice spoke her name. He threw himself beside her and took her hand and kissed it, allowing her time to recover her composure before he met her eyes.

"I bring good news," he said quickly. "The sentence is commuted to life imprisonment."

To his surprise Dorothea burst into tears.

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"It is almost as cruel," she said, "and quite as unjust. He is innocent."

"But that can not be proved," said Burke. "I have worked hard to save him, and this is the best that I could do."

"Thank you," she answered. "It was good of you."

Her tone and the manner in which she accepted his work, thinking far less of him than of Antonio, gave Burke a keen pang of jealousy. He rose and walked along the shore as if absorbingly interested in the shells and seaweed tossed out of reach of the ebbing tide, until, at a distance from Dorothea, he seated himself upon a rock and began flinging pebbles into the sea. His thoughts were in a tumult. He had been patient, but patience was at an end. The personal side of love, its eager demands, its imperious desires, absorbed him; and he felt self-pity and a deep chagrin.

Dorothea watched him wonderingly at first, then, with a quick comprehension of his mood, she followed him and stood beside him.

"My friend, I have done you an injustice," she said, in a constrained voice. "I made you a promise which I can not keep. I won your assistance under false pretences. I have conceded too much, and I have been false to you.

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There is the ring you gave me. I ask my freedom and I give you yours."

Burke took the ring, looked at it as it lay within his palm, looked up into Dorothea's eyes; then turned and with a quick motion flung the shining circlet into the sea after the pebbles. Dorothea regarded him with grave wonder, as one might observe the action of a pettish child.

"You have reason to be angry," she said. "I have treated you very badly. I humbly ask your pardon; but I meant no harm. I did not know that my heart would turn to dust and ashes. I can never love you, and you would not wish a wife who gave only duty."

"No, no," said Burke. "I wish you, heart and soul, all for my own. I wonder how I could be so patient, could consent to such an unnatural position." Here he paused, remembering the unselfish impulse which had moved him to offer her the protection of his name. He had descended far from that lofty plane. He hesitated, regretting his words; but Dorothea had turned away.

"I thank you heartily for all your kindness to me and to Antonio," she said, over her shoulder.

At the sound of this name Burke drew his brows together into a frown, as if a physical

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pain had pierced his heart. He did not move nor speak, but sat with bent head, intently watching the shining gravel as if looking among it for the return of the diamond which he had flung into the waves.

CHAPTER XVIII

Burke returned to Hilton and resumed his practice in the district, and his attendance upon the court in town. He found that he had lost the popularity which is conditional upon phenomenal success, and that he had a certain amount of prejudice to live down; but with dogged fidelity of purpose he set himself to this end. He realized that youth was over, and was conscious of his three or four gray hairs. At such a time business possesses an absorbing interest. A man takes to it as he might take to drink to escape reflection.

Hard work well directed never fails of its end. He soon regained his prestige, and was regarded as a rising man. His friends urged him to live in town, considering that he was buried in a little country place. When he was in the city he was made much of, and invited about, and maids and widows, with shy persistence, set their caps for him. It was universally conceded that such a man should not be allowed to die a bachelor.

Habit, which crystallizes fast at thirty-five,

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attached Burke to Hilton and its neighborhood. When Mr. Wilson sold the place which he had long since deserted, Burke became the purchaser. Its former owners now lived in San Francisco. Bessie was married, and Mrs. Jennings, who had become mildly deranged, was in a private sanitarium, her recovery not being considered hopeless.

As owner of Casa Blanca, Burke withdrew the suit from the superior court against the Indians; and they were allowed to exist undisturbed upon the barren reservation, where each year the ratio of deaths exceeded that of births, and the slow process of the extermination of the race continued. Mrs. Aguilar's health having failed, she had taken a reluctant farewell of her charges, and had gone to live with a relative upon a ranch near the coast. Her place was supplied by a young woman who had red hair, wore eye-glasses, and knew no Spanish, which conjunction of circumstances made her universally unpopular.

In his leisure hours Burke devoted himself in his new character of land-owner to the improvement of his property. He remodelled and refurnished the house; replanted the grounds, and by the introduction of an elaborate irrigating system he transformed the garden into a

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wilderness of palms and roses. His orchards doubled their yield of plums and peaches, apricots and figs. His vineyard spread where the chaparral had once grown undisturbed; and the winery which he started, under the direction of an Italian foreman, bade fair to gain a reputation for its vintage.

Mrs. Hereford was his regular correspondent, and through her he learned of Dorothea's movements. She was travelling abroad with friends, but had completed her three years' tour and was soon to return to California. Burke thought of her constantly. He kept her photograph in a conspicuous place upon his dressing-table. When he planned for the future, she was foremost in his dreams. When he fancied the pressure of children's forms against his shoulder, it was with her eyes that they regarded him.

One day in early spring he was strolling over the mesas of Casa Blanca, enjoying the exhilarating quality of the air, which was of a crystalline purity. As far as the eye could reach, the blue lilac had spread a mantle of tenderest azure upon the hillsides until the color of the sky was reflected from the earth as if from a mirror. He walked upon a carpet of many-colored flowers, and as he descended the

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slope, guided by a mountain brook, he trod on verdurous grass, while lace-like ferns hung suspended within touch of the rushing water, that plunged and tumbled over the rocks until it flowed in a sober stream at the bottom of the cañon. Following its course, Burke came upon the site of the Bonanza mine. The path which he had descended was the one which Fairfax had climbed, hounded by terror, when the long drought had dried the waterfall, and flowers and grass were dead and sere.

The Bonanza mine was no longer a scene of desolation and decay. Men and horses were busy here. Carts were being loaded and unloaded; a steam pump was noisily at work, and carpenters' hammers were resounding within the stamping-mill.

Burke paused in surprise to inquire the cause of the sudden transformation of the scene.

"Haven't you heard, Mr. Burke?" said the foreman. "The mine is to be pumped out and set to running again. There is the boss and her engineer over on the rock yonder. The boss is a lady, Miss Dorothea Fairfax."

Burke colored in boyish agitation as he saw Dorothea, and was aware that although she had recognized him, she delayed to greet him, being in earnest conversation with a young man whose

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remarks were demanding her attention. He was a well-dressed and self-assertive young man, who carried a note-book and pencil, and was earnestly enlarging on a subject which seemed to be of equal interest to both.

Burke sat down on a heap of stones and waited. Dorothea gradually approached him, and he had time to observe every detail of her appearance, the trim dark dress, the straw hat set upon the shining hair, the face and figure which had grown rounder and more mature, and endowed with the subtle charm which years bring to the woman whose girlhood has just been left behind. There was more alertness in her movements, more decision in her looks. Her smile was bright, but there was a tender melancholy in the curves of her mouth. To Burke she was in an instant what she had always been, the dearest object in life.

He felt a pang of misery in the thought that she could be near him, yet not his to claim and cherish. He chided the folly of the pride which had kept him silent during the absence of years. Other influences had crowded him from the place that might have been his if he had deserved to keep it.

Dorothea stood before him, pronounced his name and gave him her hand. She introduced

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Mr. Hamilton of San Francisco, for whom Burke immediately felt an instinctive ill-will.

"Perhaps you do not know that I am to be your neighbor, Mr. Burke," she said. "I heard long ago that you had bought Casa Blanca. I am going to operate the gold mine in what you will consider, no doubt, a very foolish way. The Indians are to work it for me, and the profits are to be divided on the co-operative plan. For some time there will be no profits; but the Indians will get their wages as day-laborers. It will be a great help to them."

Burke had noticed that the foreman alone was a white man. Indians wielded the shovel, pick and hammer.

"Of course, it is going to be immensely expensive," said Mr. Hamilton, with the air of one who conferred a favor by the explanation, "to pump out the mine, and put in new machinery; and the ore is low grade; but we are going to use a new process that will save a great deal after the first outlay is accounted for. We do not expect to make our fortune, do we, Miss Fairfax? but in two years I venture to say we will be making our running expenses, in five years a good profit."

Burke looked keenly at Dorothea, who

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blushed a little, reading jealous interrogation in his eyes. Burke did not know that this assumption of partnership applied only in a business sense; that Mr. Hamilton was the least sentimental of men; and that Dorothea tolerated a certain amount of familiarity only on the score of his value to her as a man of absolute reliability in his particular line of work.

Burke became suddenly conscious of middle age, of awkwardness, of miserable inferiority to this active young man of affairs, who sprang about at Dorothea's side, up and down banks of slippery shale, tracing the course of a new causeway, of a new tunnel; describing new and improved machinery for the stamping-mill, and insisting that she should know and understand each detail of the undertaking. Dorothea's spirits drooped at last under the influence of an unsympathetic presence. She looked anxiously at Burke, who felt ashamed of his ill-humor and was trying to appear at ease.

"When you are tired of it down here perhaps you will both come up to my house to luncheon," he said. "I am just settled for a month's vacation at Casa Blanca. You remember the house, Doro—Miss Fairfax; but you would not know it, it is quite transformed. Leonore is my cook, and she will be happy to serve you and

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your friend, I am sure, with the best of her ability."

Dorothea hesitated. "I am staying at the school-house," she replied. "Mr. Hamilton is camping with some friends in the neighborhood. I fancy he will accept your invitation. I must decline."

"If it is for lack of a chaperon," said Burke, "I will invite the red-haired schoolteacher."

"Some other time," said Dorothea. "Yes, I think I am tired, and I will go home now. The school-house still seems like home."

Mr. Hamilton also declined Burke's invitation, greatly to the relief of the latter, and as the young engineer refused to be diverted from his occupation, Burke found himself walking down the narrow path at Dorothea's side. Half-way to the road she paused and hesitated.

"It was on this spot they tell me the murder was committed," she said; and she stood fascinated, looking at the ground as if she could detect the trace of blood. "I could hardly bring myself at first to pass the spot," she continued. "A horrible nervous dread took possession of me every time I came into the cañon; but I determined to overcome it, and have in a measure succeeded."

"Do you remember the time of the sand-

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storm?" asked Burke, "and how you sat beside me and held my hand when you were nervous?"

Dorothea grew rosy red. "It is impossible to meet again without those old days coming back to memory," she said. "It makes our position very difficult. I dreaded that, too, when I came back to Casa Blanca; but since I mean to live here we may as well become accustomed to it. I am to build a house on my land in the cañon, and Mrs. Aguilar is coming to live with me again."

It was Burke's turn to feel the shudder of a nervous dread.

"Oh, Dorothea, not on that land, not in the cañon where the murder was committed," he said urgently. "I can not allow you to do that."

"It is my own feeling," she said, looking at him in surprise, "but I thought it a foolish weakness."

"I will tell you what I will do," he continued. "I have been looking for a tenant for my house. It is absurd for a lonely bachelor to occupy a place like that. I will move out tomorrow and rent it to you and Mrs. Aguilar at your own terms."

"Are you in earnest?" she asked. "Are you really meaning to rent?"

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"To the first comer," said Burke, stoutly. "I should prefer a good tenant like yourself. It will be a convenience to both of us."

Dorothea invited him into the school-house to discuss the proposition.

"In the presence of the red hair?" asked Burke, reluctantly. "No, come to the white house with me, Miss Fairfax. Leonore will be chaperon, if you need one; and on the spot you can decide more satisfactorily whether you like the place."

Dorothea assented, her heart beating fast as she followed him along the garden path which she had last trodden so long ago. She exclaimed with delight at the changes he had made, wandering about the garden among the tropical plants, and dipping her fingers in the spouting water of the restored fountain that plashed upon a bed of blue and yellow water lilies among which the Egyptian lotus reared its stately pink blossoms.

"How beautiful it is!" she exclaimed. "Exactly as I used to fancy it must have been in the Englishman's time. I used to believe he had planned it for some one he cared for, and that he was disappointed in love. How strange it is to think that I am now the owner of his gold mine and am going to live in his house!"

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Are you very sure you do not wish to live here yourself, Mr. Burke?"'

Burke's heart yearned with its unspoken eloquence; but he answered grimly, "A man who lays out the money which a water system costs in California can not afford to gratify his wishes."

Dorothea forthwith plunged into business. She offered a generous rent, and Burke let her have it for a third less, considering that she would be a careful tenant. He added that he would require a lease, and, Dorothea consenting, he led her into the ground-floor office, where he prepared to draw it up. The office was transformed into a luxurious study, but upon the wall still hung the map upon which Mr. Wilson had traced the boundary of the Indians' land. Dorothea paced the floor as Burke wrote, now and then pausing in her walk to look at the map and the pictures on the wall.

"How strange, how very strange!" she repeated; then with a change of tone she added, "I have not told you of my great sorrow in papa's loss. He disappeared. He never came to his Dorothea as he promised. His friends do not know whether he is alive or dead, but I know. My papa would not desert me if he lived."

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Burke stopped in his writing and watched the tears that stole upon her cheeks, feeling an almost irresistible impulse to kiss them away.

"Never mind," she said, stifling her grief. "Go on with your writing. I must be going home."

"Shall I make it for a year?" he inquired.
"Can I count on you for as long as that?"

"I shall spend my life here," she answered, "but you may make it for a year, and I will renew it annually if you are willing. My trip about the world was my last outing. I mean to give my life, the rest of it, to work among these Indians."

Burke's look clouded a little. The invincible barrier was still between them. He had hoped that Dorothea had forgotten.

"I started to tell you," she continued, "that papa's gold mines in South America have realized a fortune, and through Mr. Hereford's kindness in going down there and looking after my affairs, I have been able to prove a claim to them and receive a share of the profits. You need not have given me the rent so cheaply, Mr. Burke. I am a rich woman. I wanted to give a great deal to these Indians here, but Antonio advised me to give nothing but work. The gold mine scheme is his plan." She hesitated

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and blushed, meeting Burke's sombre look. "I have not seen him since he has been in prison," she added, "but he writes to me once a month."

Burke signed the lease and handed her the pen in silence. She affixed her name and turned quickly away. "Miss Green will be waiting for me," she said.

"I was going to offer to show you the house," said Burke, "but another time will do."

"I am rather curious about it, too," she replied, retracing her steps. "Suppose we look about a little."

"Come, Leonore," called Burke. "I want you to show a lady over the house."

The dusky maid-servant appeared beaming welcome. Dorothea gave her her hand. "You are the only one I have not seen," she said. "Your mother told me you were working here."

"Yes," said Leonore, in Spanish. "I am keeping house for Mr. Burke."

"And now you will keep house for me," said Dorothea. "Mr. Burke has rented the house to me."

"Are you going to marry him?" asked Leonore.

Dorothea blushed and shook her head. Burke was out of sight, but not out of hearing.

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He dropped into a chair and stared reflectively into the distance. "Shall I ever dare to ask her that question again," he murmured, "and how will she answer me?"

Leonore, full of importance, led the guest of honor from room to room, expatiating on the changes and improvements, a new window here, a balcony there, furniture and carpets in the latest style from town. She flung open the door of a beautiful bedroom, which was the object of her especial pride. "This is his room," she said. "There is his desk and chair by the window. He likes to look down yonder at the school-house and the rancheria. It is a pretty view. And this is his dressing-table, and he has silver things like yours, Señorita; and that is your picture in the frame. I dust it every morning."

Dorothea looked with some emotion at the semblance of herself thus honored and cherished; and feeling that her presence here was an intrusion, she hurried from the room, and left the house without again encountering its owner.

CHAPTER XIX

A week later, Dorothea and her aunt were settled as residents in the white house on the hill; and life went on in a smooth and orderly course, as it does after the most violent disturbance of routine, the new immediately becoming the customary.

In the midst of crowding interests, Dorothea was conscious of a vague regret. Something was lacking in her life, and it was not Antonio's presence, for she had long since adjusted herself to the inevitable.

The uneasiness she felt was caused by the consciousness that Burke still loved her and blamed her for the ruin of his happiness. There was exquisite flattery in this constancy of devotion. It was inevitable that in return her thoughts should dwell upon the pathos of his lonely life, and that she should recognize with a quickened appreciation all that was admirable in his character. It seemed to her now that she had never really known him, so much was revealed in the light of tender sympathy.

The little broken tendril of her destiny was

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quickened into new life, and fixed itself with gentle strength upon the object of its earliest attachment. Antonio was not forgotten; but a heavy shadow hung where the prison doors had closed, and it was impossible for her thoughts to bridge the gulf between the past and present.

It was to Burke that the warm tide of living affection turned, for the first time conscious of itself and rejoicing in its power to bless. She loved him the more for the new humility which kept him silent while his eyes spoke a language which she could not misunderstand; but she wondered that he could not with equal astuteness read her heart; and it vexed her that he chose to be a formal and infrequent visitor, relinquishing the claim of old acquaintance with the habits of the past.

"I believe that Harry Burke agrees with our gossiping neighbors that you are interested in Mr. Hamilton," said Mrs. Aguilar one day when she was alone with her niece.

"Impossible!" cried Dorothea, with indignant warmth. "How could he imagine such a thing?"

"It is natural enough, I am sure," was the reply. "I do not wonder people think of it. If Harry did not have some such idea he would not keep so much in the background, when it is

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easy to see he loves you as much as ever. I am sorry for him, for I think he is a very unhappy man."

Sweet and bitter were mingled for Dorothea in these suggestions; but a girlish shyness overcame her under the necessity of justifying her position to her aunt.

"If Harry Burke knows me no better than to believe that, I think he deserves to be unhappy," she said, while an enigmatical smile dimpled the corners of her mouth.

She rose and looked out of the window across the reaches of green hills and winding hollows bathed in the dazzling radiance of noon.

"What a day for a ride!" she added irrelevantly. "I think Dandy needs the exercise as well as I. Do not wait for me, dear, if I am late to lunch;" and she escaped from the room like a truant child.

Conscious, as she rode from the gate, that her aunt's eyes were upon her, she made a wide detour before taking the road to Hilton.

"Why did I do that?" she asked herself guiltily; and for answer she smiled and blushed, and patted her horse's neck. "You will never tell, will you, Dandy?" she said.

The ten miles were quickly passed; but within sight of the uninteresting little town set

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in the midst of a level mesa upon which the sunlight blazed unrelieved by the shade of trees, she drew rein and rode slowly. Why had she come? She wished to make no purchases at the store, for the store at Casa Blanca, now owned by Burke and made respectable by the elimination of the gin-shop, was always ready to supply her commissions by orders far and wide. She had no acquaintance in Hilton to whom she stood sufficiently in debt to make the idea of a morning call tolerable. She might visit her landlord. During a sudden rain-storm the woodshed roof had sprung a leak. It was hardly of more pressing importance than the leaky roof of the Arkansas farmer, for there might not be another rain in months. Still, a careful housekeeper will prepare for emergencies.

She entered the town and descended by Burke's office door, where she tied her horse at a post, looking carefully about her the while, but unperceived by any one but the Argus-eyed landlady of the hotel opposite, who appeared to Dorothea's uneasy consciousness to take the avenging form of Mrs. Grundy herself.

Defying her, she entered the office, the door standing conveniently ajar. Burke was absent. There was a superadded smell of fresh tobacco

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in the air. His desk was strewn with books and papers. He would no doubt soon return. She seated herself in the arm-chair where he had sat when she had engaged him to defend Antonio—at what price? She had made him a promise; he had kissed her lips to seal it; she had accepted his work, the best results of his skill, only to resume the gift and break the promise.

She rose and moved restlessly about. Upon the desk lay a fresh sheet of paper originally intended for some important legal document; but across its surface Burke had scrawled a name, scribbling idly in some pause of work, or in the vacancy of a lonely moment. The name repeated with many curls and flourishes was always the same, Dorothea.

She felt the stirring of a deep remorse mingled with a swelling tide of tender joy. "I owe him all that I promised," she thought, "and I will give him much, much more than I could dream of then."

She bent above the paper where his hand had rested, took up the pen which he had used, and across the blank surface of the sheet she wrote his name, Harry, Harry, twenty times repeated.

"How foolish he will think me!" she thought, smilingly. "What will he say if he finds me here?"

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The door opened, and a rusty-garbed client, wearing a battered sombrero, stuck his head within. "Mr. Burke in?" he asked.

"He is out," stammered Dorothea. "He will soon be in;" and she fled, pursued by shame, and remounting, took the hill-road to Casa Blanca at the best speed of her fleet-limbed horse.

As the cool wind fanned her blushing cheeks, she asked herself again and again, "What will he think of me? What will he say? What will he do?"

Burke came into his office, found his client waiting, and sat down to hear his story. It was while he was listening to a rambling dissertation, from which strict attention alone could elucidate a coherent connection, that Burke's eye fell upon the sheet, where he recognized Dorothea's handwriting. He took the paper within his hands and stared at it, while the murmur of his client's voice fell upon his ears like the unregarded sighing of the wind.

In the first pause Burke roused himself and said, "Come again to-morrow, Mr. Simons."

"Impossible," was the reply. "I came down thirty mile to see you to-day, Mr. Burke."

"I am called away on important business,"

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said Burke. "Not a moment to spare. Stay all night at the hotel at my expense. We must take time to look into your case."

"I thought it was simple enough. I thought you could give me an hour's time and finish it up."

"Very complicated, important to go slow," called Burke over his shoulder. He was already half-way to the door. "Stay a week at my expense, if necessary. I will be back when I can."

Burke was quick in deduction, and quick in action. He ran to the stable, flung the saddle on his horse, and was half-way across the mesa before his client had recovered from his astonishment.

"He must be in a hurry, I vow. Somebody must be dying, and sent for him to make a will." Mr. Simons had reached this conclusion slowly, after the consumption of his third pipe. Burke by that time was within sight of Dorothea and gaining rapidly upon her.

When she saw that she was pursued, her first impulse was to flee yet faster, her second to draw rein out of consideration for Dandy's wind and for Burke's chestnut, which flung flecks of foam upon the breeze as he tossed his head, resenting the urgency of spur and whip.

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She waited, trembling and blushing, but steadying herself with joyful resolution.

"Why did you run away?" called Burke. "Am I to take my wife by capture as the savages do?" He rode close to her and bent and looked into the eyes which she lifted shyly to his face. "Speak, Dorothea," he added. "Tell me what you meant. I am not to be trifled with. Disappointment now would make me desperate."

"I meant what you did when you wrote my name," she answered.

He put his arm about her waist. The horses stood close together, head to head, questioning each other with sensitive nostrils.

"I am under a vow," said Burke, in a broken voice. "Did I not promise never to kiss my betrothed until she offered me a kiss?"

"Take it," said Dorothea. "Take me. I love you, Harry, and am lonely without you."

The horses wondered that, after putting their mettle so severely to the test, their riders let them have their way during the remainder of the ascent. If they chose to swerve aside and nibble at the fresh young shoots in the thicket there was no one to resent the dereliction.

"You must wear the blue lilac in your wedding veil," said Burke, and he plucked a spray of ceanothus and fastened it in her hair.

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"It will soon be out of bloom," she answered.
"The orange blossoms last all the year."

"But I am not going to wait all the year," he responded. "Our engagement now has lasted four years. I believe in God's sight it has never been broken."

Her hand trembled within his. She remembered the diamond that had been flung into the sea; she remembered the grief of those days; she remembered Antonio.

"Will you marry me to-morrow?" he asked.

With a quick change of feeling she laughed merrily. "I can not marry till my lease is up," she said. "You have no house to offer me."

"I will beg you to share your house with me," he replied. "Seriously, Dorothea, I have made up my mind to an immediate marriage."

"It takes two to make a bargain," she reminded him.

"You offered yourself to me," he declared.

"But next year will do as well as to-morrow," she answered; then, as Burke gave her a look of real reproach, she raised her eyes to his and declared, "It shall be before the lilac is out of bloom."

Marta Lachusa, with Felipe for amanuensis, wrote one day the following letter to her brother:

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"I will tell you about the wedding. We all worked to gather the blue lilac for the church until it was so thick you could not see the green, though the boughs were fresh cut, and she wore a wreath of it over her white veil. The priest was not Father Gaspara, but he blessed them as well as if he was a Catholic.

"She was the happiest bride I ever saw, for she did not shed a tear. He made the promises as if he meant it, and when they came out of church he laughed and joked and shook hands with all of us. They went off in a carriage. I saw him kiss her as he got in. We had a grand dinner out of doors on big tables.

"Felipe is tired, so no more from

"YOUR SISTER MARTA."

CHAPTER XX

Dorothea's son was born the following year, at the time of the blossoming of the lilac, and she declared that his name was to be Anthony, the less melodious English equivalent for a name still dear to her. "We can call him Tony," she said to Burke, who looked his objections, but did not dare to formulate them. What will a man deny to the wife who holds his first-born in her arms?

Life at Casa Blanca ran on like a peaceful stream from year to year, becoming ever more and more absorbed into the growing life of the little Anthony. Its anniversaries were all connected with his history, the day his first tooth came, the day he took his first step alone, the day he first rode out before his father on his horse; and it was well for all when this sole despotism ceased at the birth of his sister Dora.

Tony was now five years old, and could talk in English and Spanish, and lorded it over the little Indians as he did over his parents and his godmother, Mrs. Aguilar; but he was shy and reserved in the presence of the newcomer, and

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confided to his father that he was afraid to touch the baby for fear of breaking her.

Burke was now allowed the more frequent company of his son and heir, since he had become a big boy upon sudden promotion; and he took him trips with him about the country; took him to court, and was proud of his answers and his sunny sociability; took him to his office at Hilton, and let him sit upon the desk where his father and mother had scribbled their mutual declaration of love; and gave him the freedom of his pencils and a delightful old ledger to write in. Tony looked and listened with a deep-rooted purpose. It was his plan to be a lawyer, and one more famous than his father.

One day Burke rode to Hilton, feeling the loneliness of an unaccustomed solitude. This reminded him of the blessings with which his life was crowned. He was sorry for any man who had to live alone. He was sorry for his old chum Nelson, who was walking towards him along the road in the same old hat he had worn a year ago, in a coat unbrushed and fringed at the lining, the sorry picture of an unambitious bachelor.

Nelson, upon perceiving him, ran towards him with an excited air.

"I was looking for you, Burke," he said.

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"I knew you would be going to Hilton, and I waited here to meet you. I want you to leave your horse at my house yonder, and come back with me up into the mountains. I want to show you something."

To all questionings he refused an answer. "You must see for yourself," he said. "I was hunting up there on the mountain, and I left my rifle and game bag to mark the spot. It is something that will interest you. I want you to see it before any one else."

Burke was impatient of this mystery; and unwilling to scramble on a wild-goose chase up precipitous heights and through tangled thickets; but Nelson's impatience urged him on. "I tell you, it is important," he said. "There are legal complications connected with it. You would have given all your old boots and shoes at this time ten years ago for a sight of what I am going to show you, though time has changed it a little. We all change with time," and he laughed grimly.

Burke followed with uneasy curiosity, until, after an hour's upward progress, Nelson led him to the edge of a steep declivity, where he found his rifle and game bag as he had left them. "This is the spot," he said. "Look down there and tell me what you see."

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Burke craned his neck over the wall of a natural chasm in the rocky mountain side, and started in surprise. "A human skeleton!" he said.

"That is it," said Nelson. "I saw it first from this place, and then I went down and took a nearer look. Come on. I want you to do the same."

Burke obeyed eagerly, swinging himself over the cliffs until he reached the flat rock which had been for many years an open sepulchre. The bones were white and clean. The vultures had seen to that.

"A couple of bones are broken," remarked Nelson. "The man met his death by a fall. Now this is what I wish you to observe. He wears a belt which once was leather strengthened by silver, and the silver buckle still remains, and here at the side is a silver sheath, which is empty. It once held a dagger, and as soon as I saw it I knew who this man was. He was the murderer of Samuel Jennings. He stabbed him with his dagger, and he took to the mountains to escape. Straight down yonder, you look into the cañon of the Bonanza mine. You can see the roof of the power house. A climb up by the waterfall and over the mesa would bring you to the rise of the mountain.

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It was evening, you will remember, and you know what a storm there was that night. Wandering about here he lost his footing and fell into this cleft of the rocks, where he would remain unseen by any one approaching except in the direction I happened to come. A man might lie in such a spot till doomsday undiscovered. It was by a mere chance I climbed so far. Now, I thought you were the one who would be interested. You still have the dagger. All you need to do is to fit it to the sheath."

Burke had stooped and was quickly removing the belt. He held it in his hand, and rubbed the buckle free from the dust and sand which had encumbered it. It was black with oxidization, but he could trace the figures deeply engraved upon it. It appeared to answer the description given by the man who had sold the silver-handled dagger to the owner of the belt.

"This comes just ten years too late," he said, "but it will secure the Indian's release. I will take immediate steps to that end." He looked up quickly at his friend. "This will make a nine-days' wonder," he added. "I want to have time to arrange matters undisturbed. Please say nothing about it until I give you leave."

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"As you please," replied Nelson. "It will make a thrilling article for the papers."

"It is a strange thing," Burke reflected. "Murder will out at last."

"But the strangest thing is that the Indian should allow him to escape if he saw the murder done," remarked Nelson. "He must have been an accomplice and bribed to keep quiet, but even then it is curious that he should risk his life to do it. I have almost forgotten the details of the trial, but I distinctly remember that you showed me the picture of the sheath drawn by the man who sold the dagger. That was all that was needed to complete your line of argument."

A few hours later the two men were together in Burke's office at Hilton, where the lawyer unlocked an unused drawer and took out the famous dagger. It fitted the sheath as a hand fits a glove.

Burke sat and mused, while Nelson went to a closet where a rifle stood and where materials for cleaning it were stored, and extracting the latter he busied himself with rubbing up the silver buckle, sheath and handle until all shone as bright as new. Burke, arousing himself, went to his desk and began to write hastily. Time had flown during the long tramp up and down

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the mountain. Dorothea had promised to call for him in her low cart and drive him home. It was the first time that she had been so far in months, and it was to be a gala occasion. She would be disappointed to find him still busy in his office.

A tap came at the door, and Dorothea herself entered. "I meant to take you by surprise," she said. "I fastened the horse at the store. How do you do, Mr. Nelson? I have not seen you for a very long time. I hope you will come oftener now to Casa Blanca. We have a little new lady in the house to help do the honors."

While Nelson answered her with his brightest smiles, Burke hastily gathered up his papers as well as the dagger and its sheath, and thrust them within the desk, which he locked, forgetting the buckle which Nelson still held.

Dorothea smiled at her husband, then turned at some remark of Nelson's and noticed the shining object in his hand.

"What have you there?" she asked, while Nelson, responding to Burke's warning frown, refrained from explanation. "Why, where in the world did you get this?" she continued, in an agitated tone, taking the buckle from him. "It looks like, yes, it is, papa's belt buckle. I can not mistake it. There could not be another

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like it. It was given to him by an old Peruvian silversmith, who made it with his own hands, engraving on it a copy of the inscription of the sacred stone of the Incas; and here are papa's initials on the back, 'E. F.' What does it mean, Harry? What are you keeping from me?" Her voice rose almost to a scream.

"Wait for me outside," whispered Burke to Nelson. "Say nothing till you see me again."

"Tell me, tell me," urged Dorothea. "Have you news of him. Tell me what you have discovered."

Burke had quickly grasped the situation, and decided on his course.

"Sit down here, dearest," he said, taking her cold fingers and leading her to a seat. "Yes, your father has been found. His dead body was discovered in a cleft of the high Andes, where it had lain for years undiscovered. He must have been travelling alone in an unfrequented and dangerous part of the mountains, and have missed his footing and fallen to his death. The remains had become only clean white bones, which were buried where they were discovered, the identity having been proved by this belt buckle, which, after some round-about wanderings, was sent to me. I was wondering how I could best break the news to you."

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Dorothea did not weep, but she asked eager questions which Burke found it hard to answer, though his quick invention under the pressure of necessity contrived a plausible and coherent story, with which his wife was satisfied. She ceased to question, and she gazed into the distance with an absent-minded look, as if she saw in fancy the whitening bones upon the desolate mountain-side.

"It is no new grief," she said. "In fact, it is in some ways a relief. No one now can accuse him of a broken faith, or imply anything against him, as they do when a man mysteriously disappears. He was on a journey to the gold mines which he meant should make my fortune, and he was planning to return to me and make me happy always. Dear, dear papa, what a sad, lonely death! Some day we must make a pilgrimage to that spot, no matter how inaccessible and remote it is. Sometime we will visit his grave together."

Burke held her hand and pressed her head against his bosom, and tried to soothe her grief; until, at last, she looked up at him with a smile. "It is not as if he were my only love," she added. "I have you and the children; but it pains me that they can never know their grandfather; that he can never see them."

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Before driving home with his wife, Burke found means to speak to Nelson, and to make an appointment with him; and after he had taken dinner with Dorothea, romped with Tony and seen him safe in bed, visited the little Dora in her crib, and expatiated, in response to Dorothea's eager exclamations, upon the subject of her miniature perfections, he looked at his watch and said, "I have just time to catch the night train if I ride back to Hilton. I thought you would not be happy to have me miss the children's good-nights, but I learned this afternoon of an important piece of business that will keep me till to-morrow noon in town, and after that require an absence of several days. I will be back to-morrow to say good-bye, so now it is only good-night."

Dorothea was too good a wife to interfere in her husband's business engagements, and her confidence in him was too absolute to require that he should enter with her into the details of his affairs. She was lonely when he was absent, and the sun shone brightest for her when each day's joys and cares could be shared together; but she meant that her love should never fetter his freedom.

"Be careful, dearest, as you ride down the hills," she said. "The road is stony, and it is very dark."

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"There is a waning moon," he answered, "and it will soon be up. I am counting upon its light."

She set the lamp in the window and waved a farewell until he was out of sight.

Nelson was expecting him at his house in the valley, and here Burke stabled his horse and joined his friend, who wore thick overalls and carried a bag which contained a pick and shovel. Burke divided the load with him, and together they took again the difficult path over the hills, which led them, as it had done earlier in the day, to the mountain's almost inaccessible heights. When they reached the most broken part of the ascent, it was necessary to wait for the rising of the moon to light the way.

"It is good of you, Nelson, to help me in this," said Burke; "and I thank God it was you and not another man who found the skeleton. My thoughts are still in great confusion. I would give worlds to be able to keep the truth from Dorothea. I made up a story to-day that served the purpose; but sooner or later it must come upon her like a thunderbolt. She loves her father so dearly that I do not know that she can be made to believe that it was he who was the murderer. If she should believe it the shock would almost kill her. Then there is the

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thought of the disgrace for her and for our children. The hand of God must have pointed the way to this discovery; but I feel as if the same hand had smitten me. This is the greatest trial of my life."

Nelson looked at the bowed head of his friend with keen concern. "Why go any further in the matter?" he asked. "We will bury the remains as you have planned, and we will bury the secret in our hearts. We are not even now sure of the facts in the case. Some one may have stolen Edward Fairfax's belt. These may not be his bones. Why stir up a storm of misery for your innocent wife and children when the whole matter lies in your own choice? You can command my silence. You are sure of yourself. Who else is there to be considered?"

"There is the innocent prisoner at San Quentin," replied Burke.

"He may not be an innocent man," said Nelson. "He is most likely an accomplice. It is known that he carried the note that decoyed Jennings to the spot of his assassination. Why concern yourself with him? He is housed and fed for a lifetime at the expense of the state. What more could an Indian ask?"

Burke sighed heavily. "He is innocent," he said. "A hundred forgotten things come back

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to me, all pointing one way. I was even warned that Fairfax had cause to wish for Jennings's death. There was a long-standing enmity between them. Fairfax had just completed the purchase of the Bonanza mine. That was the reason he chose that spot for a meeting. Jennings had cheated him in the sale and they quarrelled over it. He was planning his coming as a surprise to his daughter, and arrived at Casa Blanca on the day of the murder, making use of the horse that afterwards ran away. The Indian saw him, carried his note to Jennings, and connived at his escape, allowing himself to be committed in his place."

"What could have induced him to do that?" asked Nelson, incredulously.

Burke made no answer to the question.

"Fairfax loved his daughter devotedly," he continued. "He disappeared from that time. If living, he would long ago have made the fact known to her."

"All that is strong circumstantial evidence, but no proof," said Nelson. "There is only one man who could testify to the truth, and that is the Indian himself; and there is the one weak link in your chain of suppositions. No innocent man would yield without a struggle to the chance of death on the gallows. I remem-

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ber that it impressed me as strong evidence of his guilt that the prisoner had not a word to say in his own defence. He could give no explanation of his presence at the scene of the murder, but kept up a dogged silence."

Burke knew at last the reason for Antonio's silence. This to him was the strongest link in the chain of evidence. Antonio had loved Dorothea with a love which had been stronger than the fear of death. Burke made no comment on Nelson's last remarks.

"To me it is all as clear as day," he said, "and my duty is plain. I must take immediate steps to arrange for a re-opening of the case. You can keep silence, Nelson, for the present. I will go to-morrow to visit Lachusa, and find out the truth of the matter. He will be willing now to speak. His vicarious punishment has been a long one."

"Don't be obstinate, Burke," said Nelson. "A man's first duty is to his family. With the Indian's testimony, supposing that he is innocent as you believe, you can procure his pardon from the Governor, and you will have influence enough to arrange that the reason for it shall not transpire. The Indian has kept the secret for some reason, and he will keep it longer, since he can ask no more than freedom. Your

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conscience will be satisfied, and your wife and children spared disgrace and sorrow."

"But the Indian will always bear the stain of guilt," answered Burke.

"An Indian!" said Nelson, scornfully.
"How can it matter if he does?"

"Perhaps my wife has converted me," said Burke, with a sad smile. "I am beginning to believe that Indians are beings like ourselves, with human affections and human feelings."

Nelson gave a scornful snort. "You are the last man I thought likely to become a sentimentalist," he said. "Your good, hard sense was one of your greatest virtues."

"You will lay it to the effect of marriage, and become more than ever confirmed in bachelorhood. Well, the moon is rising. Let us go on."

The waning moon appeared with more than its customary suggestion of dismal deformity. Burke felt that he was moving in a miserable dream as he and Nelson, guided by the uncertain light, made their way over the dangerous cliffs to the bottom of the glen where the white bones gleamed from the shadow which obscured all other objects. The gradual disintegration of the mountain-side and the silting of debris by wind and water had filled the bottom of the

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little cañon with a bed of earth. Here the two men fell to work to dig a grave; and when it was finished the remains were taken up as reverently as might be and deposited within it.

They built a cairn of stones above the grave, and Burke tied two sticks together in the shape of a cross and set it up to mark the spot.

“Shall you say a prayer?” whispered Nelson, awed by the unusual character of the task he was engaged in, and by the hush of the night in that lonely spot.

“God be merciful to the sin of man,” said Burke, as he stood with uncovered head and eyes uplifted to the bright strip of sky that roofed their cavern of shadow.

CHAPTER XXI

Tony went with his father on his trip to San Francisco and the north. It was his first adventure into the great world, and Burke's melancholy thoughts were diverted by the necessity of seeing everything with his son's eyes and responding to his enthusiasms.

Nothing could daunt Tony's youthful courage. He found the gloom of a prison interesting; but when his father left him in the warden's parlor while he went to visit a prisoner in his cell, the boy endured in silence the nameless terrors of imagination which assail childhood, fancying himself forgotten and immured there, and rehearsing the details of grawsome events while the warden's wife believed her silent guest to be engrossed in a picture book.

Burke was conducted through echoing corridors to a distant wing of the building, where he was introduced into Antonio's cell.

"It is not visiting hours, but we give him extra privileges," said the turnkey on the way. "He must have been drunk when he did the crime. It's the only way we can explain it, for

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he's the finest man we've ever had within these walls. Two years ago he quelled a mutiny among the convicts and saved our lives. We haven't forgotten it. We give him the best we can, but that's not enough. He ought to be pardoned out for good behavior."

The door was unlocked, opened, and locked again behind him, and Burke, with some embarrassment, found himself alone with Antonio the convict.

The Indian's glossy black hair was cropped close, his tall, athletic figure was disfigured by the hideous striped suit, but his eyes were bright and his look serene.

"Mr. Burke!" he said in surprise, bowing as if to do the honors of his cell, while he took the hand which his visitor extended, and looked with anxiety into his agitated face. "Is all well?" he asked, quickly.

"My wife is well," said Burke, answering the inner purpose of the question. "She does not know of my visit to you."

Relieved from his one fear, Antonio smiled and waited for Burke to speak.

"I will proceed at once to the point," said the latter. "I have come to arrange matters with you so that I may at once petition for a new trial of your case. The murderer of Sam-

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uel Jennings has been discovered, himself a corpse, a mouldering skeleton on the mountain where he met his death on the night of the sand-storm so long ago. He was identified by the belt he wore. His name was Edward Fairfax. He was my wife's father."

Antonio clutched at the back of the chair before him. His head swam giddily. "Does she know it?" he asked breathlessly.

"I have not yet told her," said Burke. "That will come later. I will break it by degrees. I want first of all to take down your testimony. Are you ready to give me the exact account of your meeting with Fairfax and all that followed it?"

"Wait a moment," said Antonio. "Let me know what it is you offer me."

"Release and exoneration," replied Burke. "A new trial and public vindication. That will be little in return for what you have already suffered."

"Mr. Burke," said Antonio, "do you know now why I kept silence?"

"I can guess," said Burke, with averted eyes.

"You do not blame me?" asked Antonio

"Only for injustice to yourself," replied Burke.

"Then put yourself in my place. After risk-

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ing death, and gladly accepting life imprisonment, is it likely that I would give up my purpose at this late day? What new motive could there be to induce me to purchase my freedom at the cost of her suffering?"

"It is simple justice. You owe it to yourself."

"I refuse once and for all," answered Antonio. "I even prefer that you should remain in ignorance of the details of the murder. The dead man is beyond the reach of justice. Let his crime be forgotten."

In spite of himself, Burke felt an immense lightening of the heart. He knew by Antonio's look and tone that it would be useless to combat this resolution.

"There is another way," he said. "I should be satisfied with nothing less than your complete exoneration; but I can obtain the Governor's pardon for you, and the few who must be acquainted with the reasons for it will keep silence for my sake. You will be free. If you insist that it must be so, my wife need never know the truth. I am ashamed to offer this compromise with justice, but it is my most earnest wish to secure your release."

Antonio turned away and walked to the window, where he stood looking out over the wide

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prospect of hill and dale, interrupted in the foreground by the formidably impassable prison wall. His heart bounded with the thought of recovered freedom. He longed to realize the dreams that haunted him day and night; dreams of the open mesa stretching on and on to the horizon, bounded above by the fathomless vault of sky, and on either side by the ever-receding hills, bounded at its furthest limit only by the circumference of the round world; dreams of the open ocean where the wind blew strong and free, dashing the salt spray into his face, and where the vastness of the horizon was that of infinity; dreams of the smell of the white sage and the murmur of bees and the warmth of the bosom of mother earth; dreams of friendly intercourse with his kind, and the commonplace activities of life.

Across these fancies there fell one haunting shadow, and turning to meet Burke's look this shadow was upon his face.

"No, Mr. Burke," he said. "There is no place in this wide world where a man with the stain of blood upon him can find peace. I must go out free from that or I must stay and bide my time. The first I refuse, for I would be a faithless man to let ten years alter my mind in that. I made the sacrifice willingly and I have

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been happy in it. I am young and strong yet. I am thirty-three. There may be forty years of prison life before me, but each one of those I freely offer to the woman whom I have loved, as I would have offered them in duty and devotion to her if God had willed that my soul should inhabit a white man's body."

Burke bowed his head, feeling both touched and humbled, and conscious of a choking sensation in his throat. He paused long before he spoke; then he said, "Do nothing rashly. Take time to reconsider your decision."

"I need no time," replied Antonio. "It is not as if I had not thought of everything. You men in the world act, but you do not reflect. A prisoner or a monk alone has time for meditation. On any subject that you could suggest I have already prepared a line of reasoning and arrived at a conclusion. I have considered what my position might be if, after long years and in consequence of good behavior, the Governor should pardon me. I would be free. The mere thought has been a joy. But after that? After the strangeness had grown to familiarity, and I had ceased to recognize the blessing of wide spaces and unfettered movements, what place would there be for me upon earth?"

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"I might go back to Casa Blanca. Your noble wife might give me work there. She might meet me as a friend. But you would be uneasy if by any look she showed acquaintance with the Indian ex-convict. For her sake and out of regard for your generosity I must plan to keep beyond her sight. Your children would shudder if they should chance to touch my hand, for they would be told that it was stained with blood. People would draw aside from me. My fellow workmen would avoid me. Marta, my poor disgraced sister, would be faithful to me, but my presence would bring a deeper shadow upon her home. I might go into the world. What opening is there for an Indian? I am fitted to be a professor of dead languages. Would the position await me? I would take most interest in a political career. I have not even a vote. I might enlist in the army and join an Indian regiment, or be appointed as an Indian police, but the stain of blood would still be upon me. I would be a marked man, cut off from the confidence of my superiors. I would at last find the loneliness of solitude among a crowd a hundred-fold more desolate than the loneliness of my cell.

"On the other hand, Mr. Burke," and here his tone grew cheerful and the light came back

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into his eyes, "I have many blessings here. No man looks upon me as especially disgraced. My keepers are kind and generous, and grant me as many privileges as the law allows. My fellow convicts have many of them become my friends. They consult me as if they valued my advice. I have influence with them. I have the blessing of regular work. We are not forced to sit in idleness; but my task is easy, and when it grows wearisome from repetition I am permitted to vary it. I am allowed to have that fixed bar and swinging trapeze for exercise in my cell. That is a great favor specially procured for me as a reward for my conduct at the time of the mutiny. By regular exercise, I am able to keep my body in good condition. I have books to read, and in my spare moments I am translating the Greek Septuagint. When one looks forward to forty years of routine it is well to take up some study that has matter in it. After that I will begin on the Hebrew. I am not so good in that. Then, as you see, I have a box of plants in my window, which is one of the best in the prison. I am making experiments in the germination of seeds."

Here he paused, and after a slight hesitation continued: "There is another thing. You have been so nobly generous, Mr. Burke, that I

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am willing to speak from the heart; and that is the great advantage of my position. You tolerate from the life prisoner, who is almost like a disembodied spirit, what you would deeply resent from any man, most of all from an Indian. Your wife allows me to write to her once a month, and she answers my letters. There is little that is personal in them; but she has made me her overseer among the Indians; and at this distance I am still able to help my people. I give advice; I regulate the distribution of her charity; and this is all unknown to them.

"As for any deeper feeling, I have never in my life admitted to her, as I have to you to-day, that I have loved her. How could I dare presume, since I could offer her nothing but my heart, and that is given in silence as we worship the infinite? But my letters are a help to her. She tells me so; and this consciousness and the slender link of sympathy which unites our thoughts make for me the joy of living. Freedom could give me nothing in exchange for it."

Burke sat in meditative silence. Antonio, having said his say, spoke no more. To him there was nothing irksome in inarticulate musing. He did not make haste, as restless worldlings do, to fill a void of words.

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Burke at last rose heavily, like a man who bears unwilling guilt upon his conscience. He offered his hand to Antonio, and the Indian, grasping it warmly, saw with wonder that there were tears in the older man's eyes.

"Count me as your friend," said Burke, "and your lifelong debtor. My children owe their future to you. We owe you the happiness of our family life. I can never pay the debt. My little son is here with me. He is waiting in the warden's parlor. I will bring him to see you, and ask him to thank you for us."

Antonio waited with a throbbing heart while Burke was gone upon this errand. He looked into his little mirror, anxious for the first time in years as to the impression which he should make. He glanced regretfully at his striped suit, thinking it might startle a child's fancy; but Burke had prepared his son for this, and the little Tony had inborn tact.

When he entered he brought a beam of sunshine with him. In all these years Antonio had seen no children, and he had a strong man's instinctive love for them.

The warmth of welcome in his eyes spoke straight to Tony's heart. The child walked up to the prisoner and held out his hand, which Antonio grasped with a thrill of pleasure.

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"I did not know it was you my papa came to see," said Tony, "or I would have been up here before. I was playing prisoner downstairs, and I did not like it at all. I am sorry you have to be shut up here. I know a lot about you. Why, I was named after you, so you must be my god-father."

He took a chair and looked with serious friendliness into Antonio's beaming face.

"What are you here for, anyway?" continued Tony, since it appeared that the burden of the conversation fell on him.

"On a false charge," his father hastened to reply. "Men are sometimes imprisoned by mistake."

"Oh, papa, you must get him out," said Tony.

"Never mind that, dear child," answered Antonio. "It is possible to be quite happy in prison."

Tony looked at the high, barred window, the bare floor, the cheerless walls, and his little lip quivered. He put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a new two-bladed knife, his greatest treasure.

"Take that," he said to Antonio, averting his look to hide his tearful eyes, as well as to avoid the full consciousness of the sacrifice he was making.

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Antonio held the present in his palm, uncertain how he might accept or refuse the gift.

"You have done well, Tony," said Burke. "There is nothing I can give Mr. Lachusa that can repay him for what he has done for me and for you."

"Then we are even," said Tony, with a sigh of relief.

He was now quite ready to go, but after Burke had again shaken Antonio's hand, Tony hesitated and whispered to his father.

"Tony is not quite sure but that he is too much of a man for kisses," Burke explained, "but he says that as long as you are his god-father he would like to kiss you good-bye."

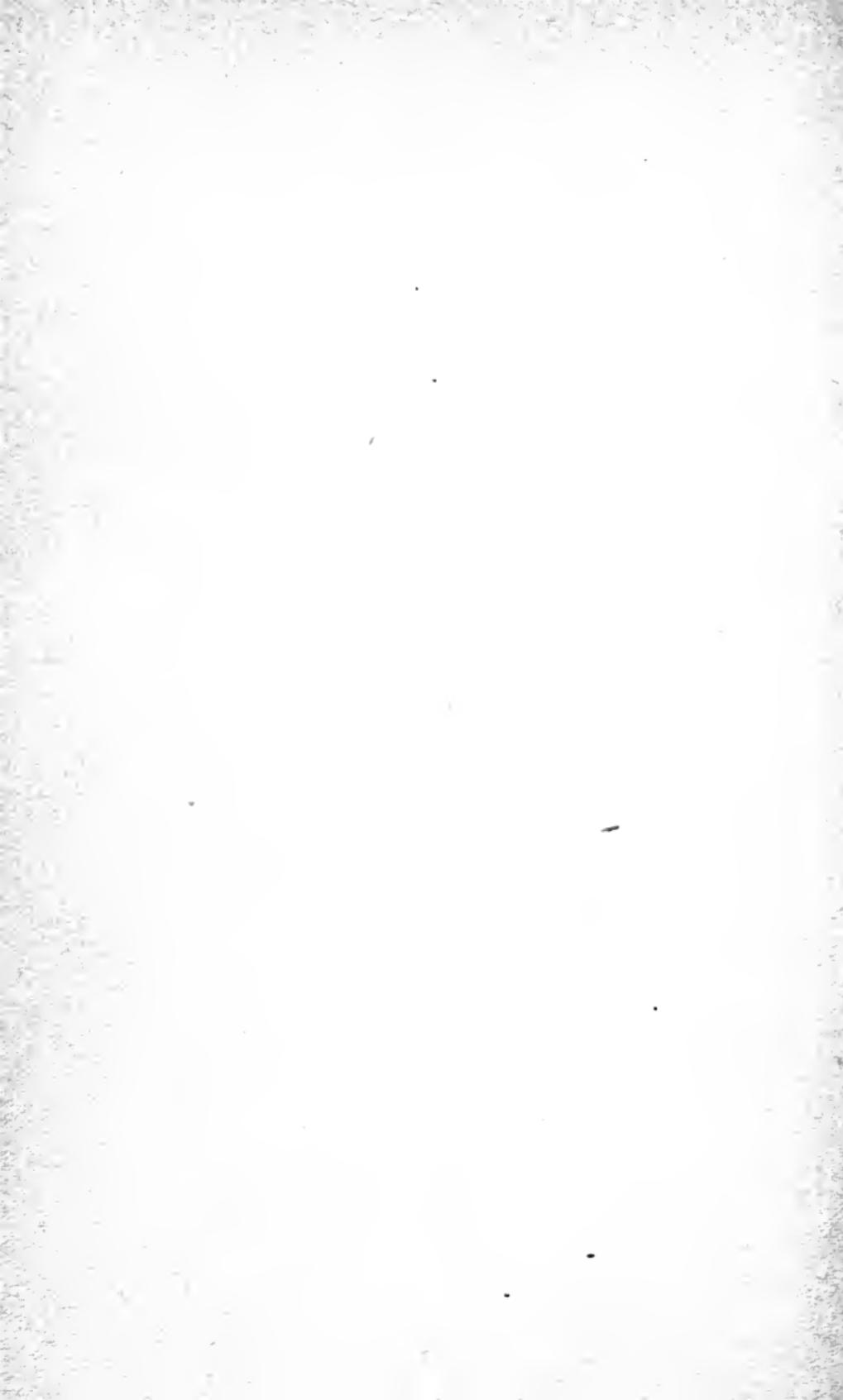
Antonio stooped and pressed the child's form to his heart and his lips to his own. The door closed behind his visitors, and they were gone. He was once more alone; alone for a lifetime.

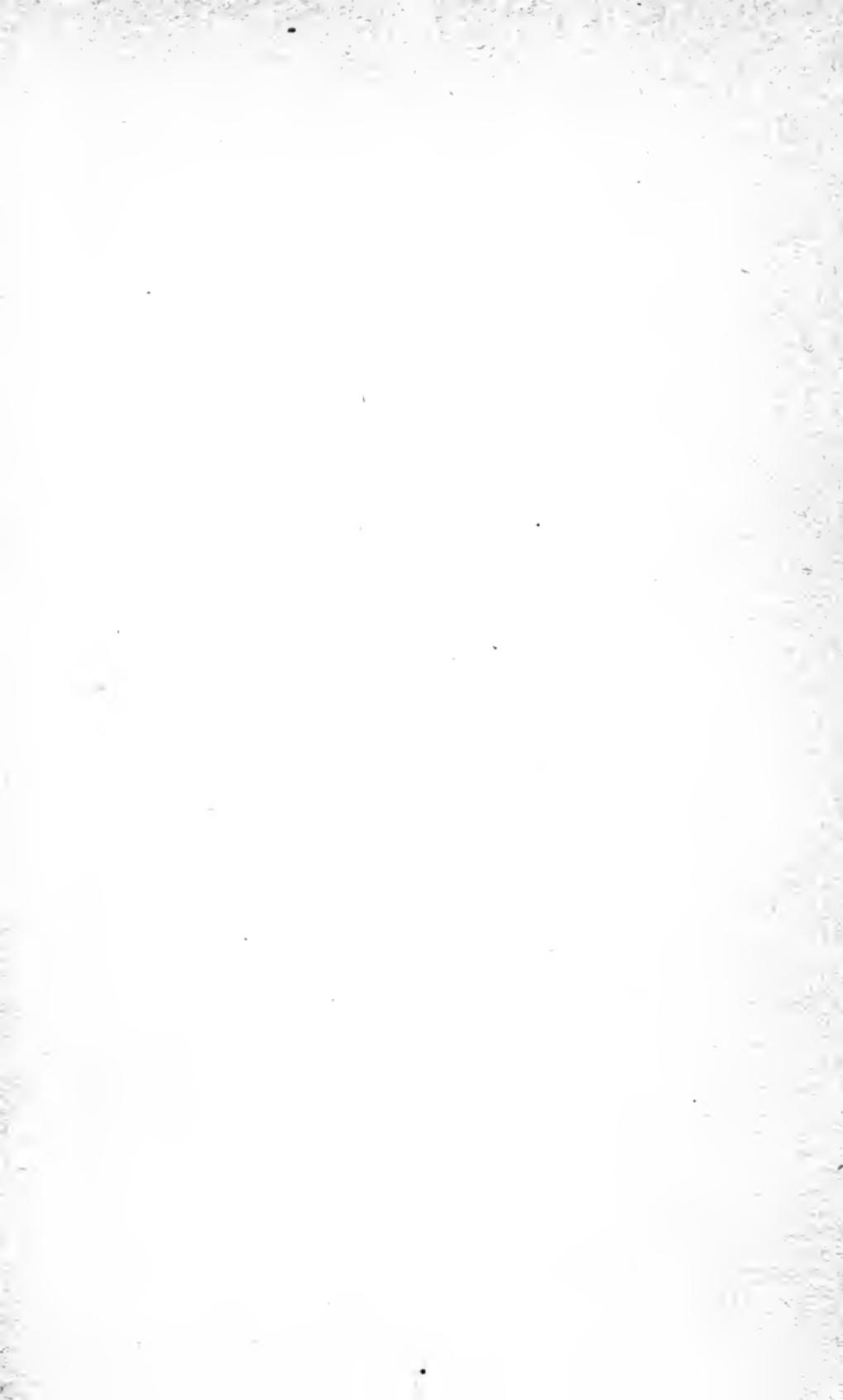
He flung himself upon his knees.

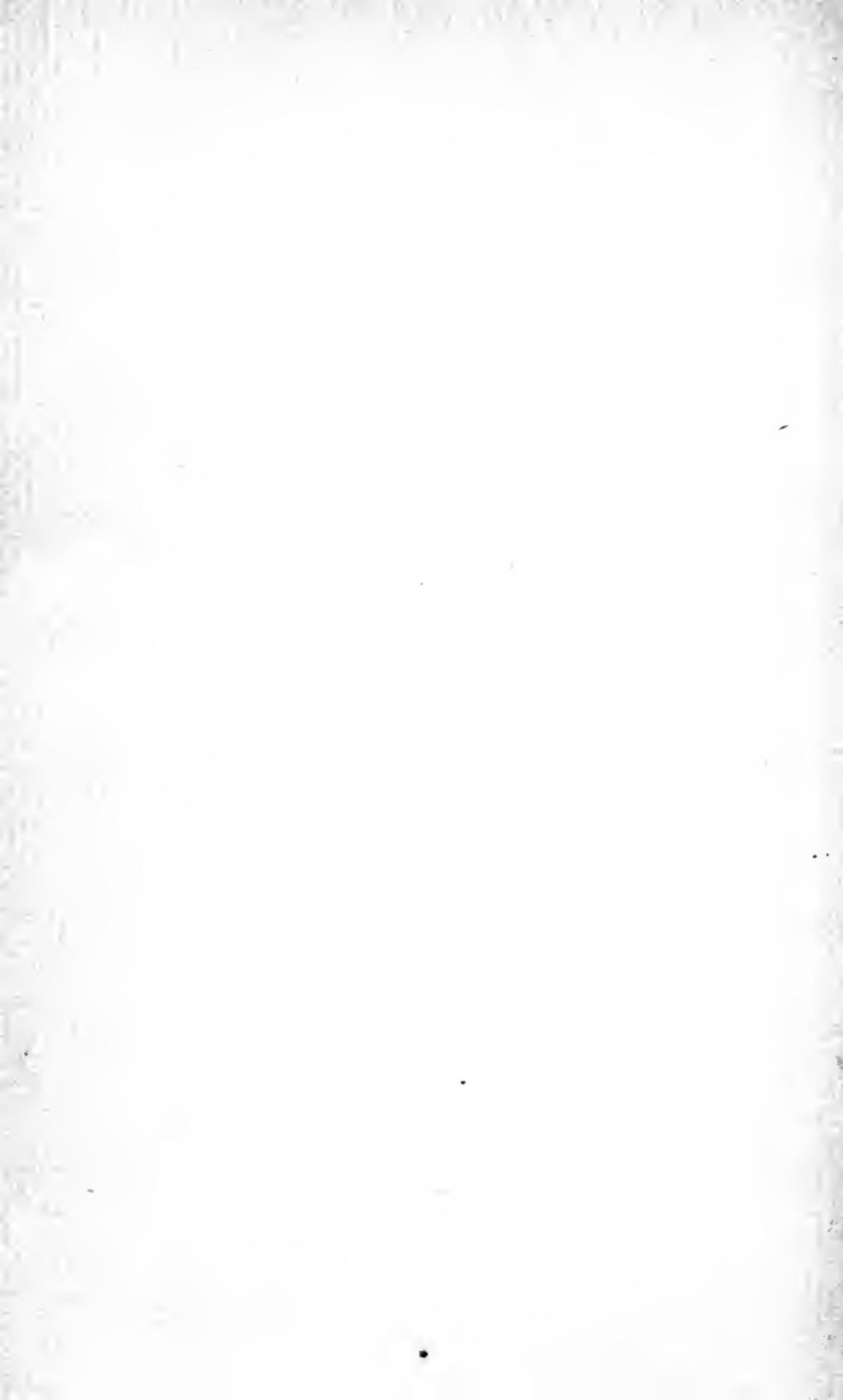
"God grant me patience, and the victory of peace," he prayed, resisting the wild uprising of thoughts and wishes long since stifled. "Let it be enough for my life's joy that I have felt upon my lips the kiss of her child."

THE END

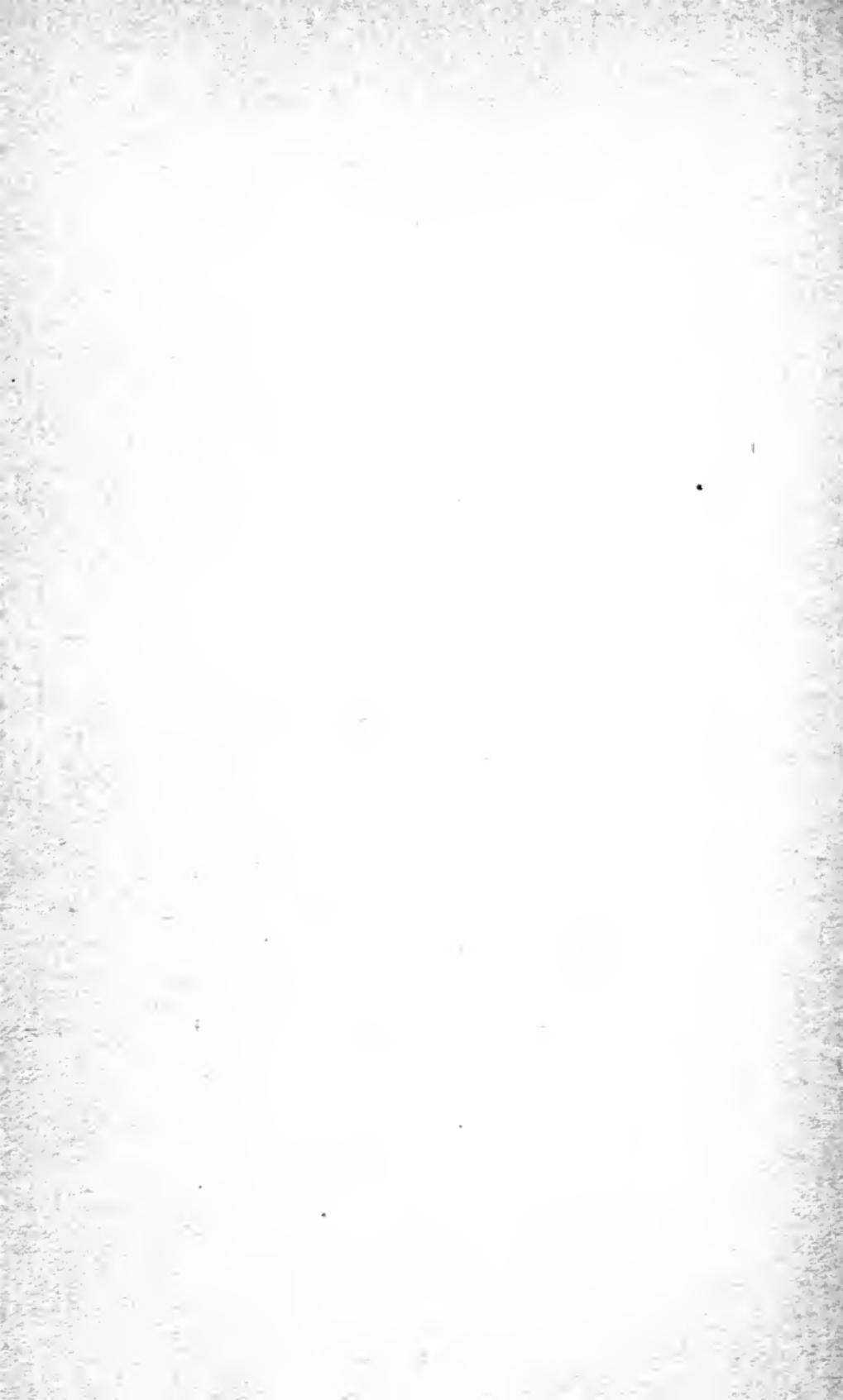
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